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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with the TV BRICS international media network, Moscow, November 2, 2024

Question: In 2024, Russia is chairing BRICS, and the summit in Kazan emerged as a pivotal event. Could you summarise the principal outcomes of the summit and Russia's overall chairmanship?

Sergey Lavrov: The summit underscored the rapidly growing influence of BRICS and the eagerness of numerous countries to engage with its initiatives.

Several countries have formally applied to become full members, while others have expressed interest in joining as partner nations – a new category established at the Kazan Summit. In 2023, we expanded the number of countries from five to ten. For the time being, we have decided to focus on establishing the partner nations category to facilitate collaboration between the "new" full-fledged countries and the "old" BRICS states within this new framework.

The Russian chairmanship has made significant strides in this regard, thanks to a collective effort. We achieved mutual understanding on nearly all major issues, although there are always nuances. The Declaration that was adopted resulted from a balanced consideration of interests. Unlike at some Western forums, there was no attempt to exert pressure on anyone. Instead, we sought mutually acceptable language, which we successfully identified on all matters.

The key highlight of this declaration is the urgent need to substantially increase the representation of countries from the Global South and Global East in global governance mechanisms, including the UN Security Council, the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.

Regarding the international monetary and financial system, there are two primary conclusions. Firstly, there is a call for developing countries, particularly the BRICS nations as the fastest-growing economies, to receive voting rights on the IMF and World Bank boards that reflect their true economic weight and share in the global economy and GDP. Currently, this is significantly understated due to the

United States' reluctance to reallocate quotas and relinquish its votes. The United States holds a "package" in the IMF that enables it to veto any decisions, which is far from ideal.

The same situation persists in the WTO, where the United States has been obstructing its dispute settlement body for years, at least for a decade. This body was established precisely to address contradictions that inevitably arise among market participants, such as accusations of dumping, overpricing, and unjustified rate increases. However, it remains blocked, lacking a quorum, and the United States shows no intention of resolving this issue.

Reform of existing institutions remains on the agenda, but concurrently – and this is a shared perspective and one of the most significant conclusions of the BRICS efforts at this stage – leading up to the final phase of the Russian chairmanship, there is a collective desire to establish alternative payment mechanisms. These include interbank settlements utilising national currencies and insurance mechanisms that are not intended to counter the post-World War II system centred around the dollar. A parallel system is deemed necessary, given the dollar's increasing use as an aggressive tool in the global economy. The uncertainty about who might be targeted next means that no one is immune to the dictatorial use of the dollar, especially considering the precarious position of the United States in today's world. They sense that their hegemony is gradually slipping away (a process that will be lengthy rather than swift), and they aim to employ all means, including the most illicit tactics, to maintain it.

To mitigate this risk, the creation of settlement systems and payment platforms that are not vulnerable to such risks has become a shared objective. This was a key item on the agenda at the Kazan Summit and during meetings throughout the year involving finance ministers and central bank governors. Recommendations have already been formulated. While not yet finalised, they provide a foundation for the development of reliable, sustainable, long-term systems. I am confident that Brazil, as the incoming chair, will continue this work.

Beyond the critical monetary and financial domains that underpin the real economy, support was also given to sector-specific initiatives, including our proposal to begin preparations for establishing a BRICS grain exchange, as well as investment and geological platforms. This initiative primarily originated from the African countries within BRICS. Additionally, we proposed two projects – the formation of working groups on transport and nuclear medicine – which received

backing both at the BRICS meeting itself and in the adopted Declaration. On the second day of the Kazan event, during a high-level meeting in the BRICS Plus/Outreach format, all 35 participants – BRICS nations and invited guests – endorsed this attitude and direction, which had evolved in previous years but accelerated under the Russian chairmanship. This was largely due to the significant rise in interest in the group, which is viewed as the forefront of a movement towards a more equitable world, serving as a bulwark against dictate and arbitrary practices still prevalent in international relations, particularly by the collective West.

Question: How would you evaluate the outcomes of implementing one of Russia's priorities as part of its chairmanship – specifically, the effort to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation among participating countries?

Sergey Lavrov: Several meetings have taken place between members of BRICS legislatures, as well as in the outreach format, and with other states that have yet to establish ties with the group. For instance, in Geneva in 2024, a session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union – of which Russia is a participant – was held. On the sidelines of this session, BRICS parliamentarians met with representatives from other countries interested in building relations with the group.

The second key initiative in our inter-parliamentary programme is the first meeting of the heads of international affairs committees from the national parliaments of BRICS countries, marking a first in the group's history. This BRICS Plus meeting is set to become a permanent element of our group's activities in the years ahead.

The 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum was held, continuing a longstanding tradition for this body. Parliamentarians from the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly also took part, along with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, who is also Speaker of the Tanzanian parliament. Although some criticism was directed at her, it was ultimately dismissed, as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its leadership must work with all legislative bodies of the IPU member countries.

I am optimistic about the future of the parliamentary dimension, and we intend to support it in every way possible.

Question: You mentioned the expansion of BRICS, with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joining the group. What positive developments have emerged within the association as a result of their accession?

Sergey Lavrov: Influence. The new BRICS, or “big BRICS,” as our Chinese colleagues call it, now accounts for 35 percent of global GDP based on purchasing power parity. President Vladimir Putin highlighted this figure, noting that it surpasses the aggregate share of the G7 countries in global GDP by several percentage points. BRICS also represents 42 percent of the world’s population, over 30 percent of the planet’s landmass, and roughly a quarter of global exports. These numbers are expected to grow as industrial production surges both within BRICS countries and in states seeking to join the group.

Among the newly joined countries, Egypt stands out as the largest economy and most influential nation in North Africa, as well as a leading member of the Arab League, whose headquarters are in Cairo.

Ethiopia, hosting the African Union headquarters, plays a dual role in BRICS as both a national entity and a representative of the entire African Union.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also brings significant potential, possessing the third-largest oil reserves globally, which positions it as a potentially strong economic force.

The United Arab Emirates is widely recognised as a major global centre for logistics, trade, and re-export.

Saudi Arabia stands as a leader in the Muslim world, home to Islam’s two holiest sites.

Each of these new members brings a well-established reputation and global respect, further enhancing the stature and influence of BRICS.

Question: Following the recent expansion, the combined population of BRICS countries now exceeds 3.2 billion people. With this in mind, would you say that BRICS today influences global processes not only within the group but also across Asia, Africa, and Latin America?

Sergey Lavrov: BRICS influences internal processes by inspiring populations with information about its achievements, goals, and collaborative initiatives. Citizens view BRICS as a model of equality and mutual benefit, and in elections, people in the Global East often support politicians who resonate with these values and express a desire to strengthen ties with BRICS in various ways.

As I mentioned earlier, several countries are seeking full membership, and this matter will be addressed over the next year. Additionally, many nations are interested in participating in BRICS events, with over thirty expressing this desire. The criteria for designating partner countries will be established in due course.

Following the summit in Kazan, the Russian chairmanship extended invitations to some of the states that requested to engage with us, with more than ten of them having received consensus support from the BRICS states.

We have agreed that once we receive a response from an invited country, we will announce its designation as a partner country within BRICS. These countries will have the opportunity to participate in all BRICS events. While a distinct format will remain for meetings exclusively involving full members, partner countries will be welcome at all other gatherings, including summits like Outreach Plus, as well as meetings of foreign ministers and industry sectors (such as energy, economy, trade, health, and culture). We are eager for partner countries to engage in this collaborative work and they will be involved in nearly all events.

Question: How is the interaction in cultural and humanitarian cooperation between BRICS and BRICS Plus countries evolving?

Sergey Lavrov: Numerous events have taken place, generating significant interest and attention. For the first time, the BRICS Sports Games were held in June of this year, open to all participants. More than 80 countries took part, showcasing 27 different sports disciplines. I am confident that we will work towards making these games a regular occurrence.

In the realm of humanitarian affairs, political activity is closely linked. In June, Vladivostok hosted the first International Inter-Party Forum, attended by around 40 parties from BRICS and partner countries. The inter-party movement For the Freedom of Nations! was established, with the objective of urging ruling parties and other interested parties to work towards the eradication of remaining colonial influences.

Several non-self-governing territories also exist. Importantly, colonial and neo-colonial practices have not vanished from international trade. The West's interactions with Africa often reflect these colonial methods, where raw materials are extracted while the associated value and profits remain with Western countries. The forum was both interesting and well received.

Innovations during our chairmanship also focused on local self-governance. A municipal forum was held, featuring engaging discussions about the everyday lives of citizens and how chairpersons of city and village councils address their challenges. This topic emerged from real-life experiences.

I see numerous opportunities to enhance our humanitarian and cultural cooperation. Next year, all BRICS countries are invited to participate in the

international song contest Intervision, which we are organising. Together with our colleagues from television, we have decided to revive this name from Soviet times, which referred to a music competition among member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Intervision will serve as an important cultural initiative, conveying the message that it is better to engage with one another rather than retreat into our individual spaces, and to embrace the idea of living together on one planet.

Question: With a song through life?

Sergey Lavrov: With a song through life.

Question: The exchange of information is crucial for fostering partnership relations between BRICS and BRICS Plus countries. In this context, how do you view the recent establishment of the BRICS Plus information and cultural media centre in Moscow?

Sergey Lavrov: Positively. The Foreign Ministry played a role in this initiative, with our official representative involved in both the preparation and the opening of the centre.

In 2024, significant events in the media sector also took place. In September, we held a Media Summit to commemorate the 120th anniversary of TASS, featuring engaging presentations that participants found enjoyable. We will certainly continue to leverage our resources, including the newly established BRICS Plus information and cultural media centre.

Question: You have mentioned that Russia is passing the BRICS chairmanship to Brazil. Besides the payment system and related issues, what other discussions and outcomes do you anticipate from the group's work in 2025?

Sergey Lavrov: I believe that the payment platform, along with settlement and insurance mechanisms, will be among the priorities during Brazil's chairmanship.

At the 2023 BRICS summit in Johannesburg, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva took up the Russian chairmanship's focus on alternative payment systems. This initiative, which is embedded in the Johannesburg Declaration, guided the efforts of finance ministers and central bank governors. While progress is evident, we must see it through to its logical conclusion to establish ready-to-use mechanisms.

I have no doubt that our Brazilian colleagues will intensify their efforts, given that this is an initiative of their President. I expect that President Luiz Inacio

Lula da Silva will ensure that the matter remains among the most important priorities.

We expect – and I am confident this will be the case – that work on Russia’s initiatives will continue. This includes a grain exchange, an investment platform, and groups focused on transport and nuclear medicine. These are practical issues of interest to all BRICS countries. I have no doubts about this, and we will actively support the Brazilians in these efforts.

Naturally, the philosophical foundation of the group’s activities will endure. This pertains to the broader movement towards the democratisation of international relations and enhancing the role of developing countries and the World Majority in global governance mechanisms. I have mentioned the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. This work will proceed in tandem with the creation of our own system, independent of external risks.

A more equitable representation of the Global South and East in global governance mechanisms implies reforming the UN and its Security Council.

We have clearly reaffirmed our stance: we support only the increased representation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The West is already disproportionately represented there; of the fifteen members of the Security Council, six represent the West. This is incongruent with any statistics regarding population, industrial output, and the size of the respective countries. Specifically, we support India, Brazil, and the collective initiative promoted by the African Union to reform the Security Council.

I could not adequately present all aspects of our work in Kazan without mentioning a few foreign policy subjects that arose during discussions and are reflected in the Declaration. Particular attention was paid to the crisis in the Middle East and the catastrophe facing the Palestinian people, which is now spilling over into neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The Declaration contains a robust paragraph on the urgent need to halt this bloodshed.

Similarly, we have not shied away from discussing the Ukrainian crisis. Quite the opposite, during the preparations and throughout the summit, we engaged in proactive discussions, with Russian President Vladimir Putin addressing this issue. We reached a fundamentally important agreement on the wording in the Declaration. Within this framework, alongside the countries’ reaffirmation of their known positions expressed at the UN General Assembly and other forums, it was emphasised that the primary objective now is to seek solutions based on the

principles of the UN Charter in their entirety and in interrelation. To date, numerous initiatives on the Ukrainian crisis have been proposed – many with the best of intentions – but none have included the notion that the principles of the UN Charter must be applied comprehensively, not selectively.

What does this entail? The West tends to discuss Ukraine by solely highlighting the principle of territorial integrity, as if there were no other principles in the UN Charter. However, there is also the principle of self-determination of peoples. The UN General Assembly resolved that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries whose governments respect the principle of self-determination of peoples, and thus represent the entire population residing in a given territory, must be respected.

Did the racist regime that established itself in Kiev following the 2014 coup represent the South-East of Ukraine or Crimea, which refused to recognise the coup leaders ten years ago?

Crucially, the UN Charter, before mentioning the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination of peoples, mandates all UN members to respect human rights, without distinction as to race, gender, language, or religion. The West, while proclaiming itself the “human rights champion” at every opportunity, has never once mentioned this in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. “Supporters” of the settlement ignore and refuse to acknowledge the laws enacted over the past decade that prohibit the use of the Russian language in any sphere – be it education, media, culture, or daily life – constituting a gross violation of the UN Charter. Similarly, they have overlooked the ban on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The Nazi regime in Kiev flagrantly violates the key principles of the Charter, while the West praises it, claiming they are defending "European values." These issues must be brought to light.

In this regard, I consider the fact that the Kazan Summit Declaration, concerning the Ukrainian crisis, for the first time enshrined an approach requiring respect for the principles of the UN Charter in their entirety and interrelation to be one of our main political achievements at this event. This is particularly relevant given that this Declaration was endorsed by respected, influential, rapidly growing, and politically active nations.

There is always room for refinement. Yet, we are pleased with the progress of our chairmanship and the successful culmination of the summit in Kazan.

