



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 3 April 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that the Russian Federation, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of April 2023, will hold an open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”. The event will take place on 24 April. Sergey Lavrov, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, is expected to chair the debate. All States Members of the United Nations are encouraged to participate at the ministerial level.

In this regard, I would be grateful if the present letter and the attached concept note for the above-mentioned debate could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Vassily Nebenzia



**Annex to the letter dated 3 April 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Concept note for the Security Council open debate on maintenance of international peace and security: effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to be held on 24 April 2023**

**Introduction**

Seventy-seven years ago, the United Nations Organization was founded as the result of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War. Fundamental principles and norms of international law governing international relations were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Its founders were determined to maintain and strengthen international peace based on freedom, sovereign equality, equal rights and self-determination, justice and security and develop friendly relations and cooperation between nations.

**Background**

After the end of the cold war, when aspirations for peace were unprecedentedly high, the world faced instead the establishment of unipolar world order, which presented a serious challenge to the efficiency and stability of the United Nations system based on the Charter. In a political landscape, a number of checks and balances enshrined therein ceased to work effectively.

Today the world is facing another deep-reaching systemic transformation. Namely, natural and rapid decline of unipolar world order and the emergence of a new multipolar system.

We are witnessing a gradual diffusion of political power, with stronger positions for different players that are capable of choosing their own path of development and may become independent centres of the emerging multipolar world in the future. Such States or their associations are striving for independence or “strategic autonomy”. For them the values and principles of the Charter are all the more important as they guarantee sovereignty, independence and social and cultural identity. They seek the freedom to determine their own future and develop harmoniously as they see fit, based on their interests.

Against this backdrop, we see some stakeholders undertaking attempts to preserve the unipolar world order, by imposing the “might is right” principle and trying to replace universal norms of international law with a “rules-based order”. We witness selective application of international law and unabashed double standards. The unfortunate tendency is disrespect for or even full defiance of resolutions of the Security Council on different country-specific dossiers. Meanwhile, certain issues are hyped up exclusively for political purposes aimed at diverting global attention and resources from more acute crises and critical problems and challenges, including humanitarian ones. The norms of international law, including the Charter, are treated as a “menu” – to pick and choose from. Decisions proposed under the guise of the concept of “multilateralism” are often being made in small circles of like-minded States with the intention of carrying the rest along or imposing one’s will through pressure or coercion. We witness the work to enhance the existing and create new blocs of States, including the military ones, to label and separate States. In parallel, we see attempts to change the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations and

other international organizations, artificially bolstering non-governmental actors that often have non-transparent agendas.

It all leads to the disruption in functioning of the United Nations system and United Nations organs and unprecedented increase in the number of non-consensual decisions and divisive votes. Evident “victim” of this process is the international human rights system, which is being abused by some States to achieve clearly political purposes. We also see attempts of some States to instrumentalize international judicial bodies for interests that have nothing to do with peaceful settlement of disputes. This undermines the United Nations Organization’s ability to elaborate effective answers to strategic challenges of today’s era. The situation has an overarching influence both on Member States and on international relations at large.

One of the major challenges is the steep deterioration of the situation in the area of global security caused by the desire to review the strategic balance and ignore other States’ security concerns. Approaches based on the principle of a zero-sum game have a negative impact on multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Unilateral steps trigger a loss of trust among the sides, build up strategic risks and instigate the arms race.

In the past 30 years, we have witnessed a number of crises and invasions – in the Balkans, the Middle East and Asia. This undermines norms and principles of international law, as well as important arrangements like the Helsinki accords, leading to erosion of regional and global security.

Establishing a truly effective multilateral system based on generally recognized norms and principles of international law and free from vestiges of colonialism is essential for maintaining the global balance of power and ensuring the conditions for humanity’s steady advance based on a unifying and constructive agenda. This requires all States to reject all neocolonial manifestations, including unilateral sanctions, and to recommit to the goals and principles of the Charter as part of the process to build a multipolar world order, ensure cultural and civilizational diversity, and democratize international relations.

Multilateralism makes it possible to facilitate long-term stability, indivisible security and good-neighbourliness while retaining unique cultural and civilizational features and just development conditions for all States, regardless of their location and size, their demographic, resource and military potentials and their different political, economic and social systems. The rejection of bloc logic and provocative actions infringing on other stakeholders’ security interests is crucial. We perceive aspiration towards multilateralism as joint work aiming to solve common problems, a means for attaining and maintaining an equitable and democratic international order.

The key task is the restoration of the ability of the United Nations to act as a central mechanism for coordinating the interests of Member States and their actions to achieve the goals of the Charter. To bring back the culture of dialogue and consensus, it is important to acknowledge that the period of unipolarity and dominance is over. As one of the initial steps, parameters and principles of coexistence must be agreed upon that minimize conflict potential and risks of escalation. Any agreements should proceed from the principles of equality. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter, remains crucial. In high demand are initiatives that aim at providing security guarantees and implementing confidence-building measures in the interest of mitigating tension. A trust between Member States and true ambition to reach consensus, even if hard-won, by accommodating each other’s interests should be restored.

It is vital to ensure that the Security Council's prerogatives are not undermined, and the Council retains its central role in conflict settlement and maintenance of international peace, as envisaged by the founders of the United Nations. The Security Council members have a special responsibility to cast aside their disagreements and work collectively to ensure a maximum seamless transition to the equitable world order.

**Questions for the discussion**

1. How can the United Nations contribute to smooth transition to fair and equitable global world order?
2. The Charter and international law provide guidance for Member States amid the transformation period. What could be done to re-establish the culture of dialogue and consensus in the Organization, including its Security Council? What is the best way of demonstrating that the situation with a selective approach to the norms and principles of international law, including the Charter, is unacceptable and cannot continue?
3. How can such initiatives as Our Common Agenda and the New Agenda for Peace contribute to the seamless transformation and lay the ground for more effective multilateralism?

**Format**

Open debate. All Member States are invited to participate.

**Briefers**

The Secretary-General, António Guterres.

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