

In 2017, Russian diplomacy addressed multidimensional tasks to ensure national security and create a favourable external environment for our country's progressive development. Russia maintained an independent foreign policy, promoted a unifying agenda, and proposed constructive solutions to international problems and conflicts. It developed mutually beneficial relations with all interested states, and played an active role in the work of the UN, multilateral organisations and forums, including the G20, BRICS, the SCO, the OSCE, and the CSTO. Among other things, Russian policy has sought to prevent the destabilisation of international relations, and this responsible policy has met with broad understanding in the international community.

1. Special attention was reserved for maintaining stability and developing integration processes within the **Commonwealth of Independent States**. Russia's CIS presidency in 2017 contributed to further strengthening economic, law enforcement, cultural and other forms of cooperation between our countries, as well as foreign policy coordination. Significant achievements of the **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)** include completing work on the Customs Code, approving the roadmap of actions to promote integration, and adopting an action plan to implement a coordinated transport policy of the member states for 2018-2020. Completing talks with Beijing on an agreement on trade and economic cooperation was an important stage in the process of **harmonising the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt**, which is part of China's One Belt One Road initiative.

2. The truly allied nature of relations between Russia and **Belarus** was reinforced by the joint strategic exercises of the two countries' armed forces, Zapad (West) 2017, in September. Relations with other allies under the **Collective Security Treaty Organisation**, such as Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have been developing dynamically. The adoption by heads of member states of the Declaration on the 25th Anniversary of the Collective Security Treaty and the 15th Anniversary of the Organisation in November was the main political outcome of CSTO activities.

Our ties with Uzbekistan have become noticeably more active. The signing of the bilateral Treaty on Strategic Partnership opened a new page in our traditionally close relations with **Turkmenistan**. The draft Convention on the Legal Status of the **Caspian Sea** was finally agreed during a December meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian States with an eye to signing it during the Big Five summit in Kazakhstan in 2018.

3. Russia pursued a constructive policy in efforts to settle the **intra-Ukrainian conflict** by way of implementing the Minsk Agreements. In September, the President of Russia proposed deploying a UN mission in that region in order to protect OSCE SMM observers. In December, Russia facilitated a prisoner exchange between Ukraine, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic.

4. On the **European track**, active political contacts were maintained with Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Finland, the Czech Republic, and Serbia. Russia reinforced its leading role in promoting international Arctic cooperation, having held the 4th **Arctic: Territory of Dialogue** forum in March in Arkhangelsk.

The upturn in high-level and top-level political dialogue and sectoral cooperation was a positive outcome in our cooperation with the **European Union**. There were no opportunities to constructively develop contacts with the **North Atlantic Alliance**, which pursues a confrontational policy with regard to Russia. The **OSCE** platform was actively used to assert Russia's view of a wide range of pan-European problems. Russia participated in the work of the **Council of Europe's** bodies. Russia supported the efforts of its representatives in the CoE Parliamentary Assembly to restore this body to a healthy mode of operation without any discrimination.

5. Russia's active involvement in the affairs of **Syria** contributed to the elimination of the main forces of the Islamic State terrorist group in that country and the formation of prerequisites for a political settlement of this conflict under UN auspices. In conjunction with Iran and Turkey, Russia acted as the guarantor of the ceasefire agreements between the government forces and the armed opposition, and worked out the parameters for holding the Syrian National Dialogue Congress with the participation of a wide range of representatives of the Syrian people.

6. Our bilateral relations with other states of the **Middle and Near East**, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, received a major boost. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on April 7, Russia reaffirmed its commitment to the establishment of a **Palestinian state** with its capital in East Jerusalem, recognising West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in this case.

7. With a proactive role played by Russia, India and Pakistan have become members of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**. In order to intensify the search for ways to achieve an **Afghan settlement**, Russia initiated the resumption of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group's activities and held a meeting of the group in October. In February and April, consultations on Afghan issues were held in the Moscow format in an effort to facilitate the process of national reconciliation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

8. Two visits by President Putin to China (the May meeting as part of the Belt and Road initiative and the September BRICS Summit) and the visit by President Xi Jinping to Russia in July reflected the positive dynamics of **Russian-Chinese relations** that are characterised by comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation.

Advancing a joint initiative for the peaceful settlement of the **nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula** was one example of the strengthened mutual understanding between Moscow and Beijing on international security issues.

Dialogue and cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines advanced at a good pace.

9. Relations with most countries of the **Western Hemisphere** retained their traditionally constructive quality. There were summits with Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Uruguay.

Contacts were established with the new **US** administration. Personal meetings between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump took place on the sidelines of the July G20 summit in Hamburg, as well as during the APEC forum in Danang. Interaction with Washington on the bilateral agenda and the resolution of pressing international issues was carried out to the extent that coincided with Russia's national interests.

10. Russia met its commitments in the sphere of supporting **WMD nonproliferation** regimes. The process of **liquidating Russia's stockpiles of chemical weapons** has been completed. Support for full implementation by all parties of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to resolve the situation surrounding the **Iranian nuclear programme** has remained a policy of principle.

11. In the context of work to **preserve the historical truth about World War II**, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, put forward an initiative to create an international legal framework against the destruction of memorial heritage.

12. Russia hosted **major international forums**, such as the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students (October), the 137th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (October), the 21st St Petersburg International Economic Forum (June), the Eastern Economic Forum (September), the 6th Moscow Conference on International Security (April), and the 8th International Meeting of High Representatives for Security Issues (May).

The FIFA Confederations Cup (June-July 2017) in Russia was the prologue to the **FIFA World Cup**. This major international sporting event will be held in our country in 2018.