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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's answer to a media question following his telephone conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Moscow, February 1, 2022

Question: Has Moscow responded to the Americans' written materials that were sent following Russia's proposals on security guarantees? What was the gist of your telephone conversation today with Antony Blinken? What contacts are planned for the future in this context?

Sergey Lavrov: Today, we heard from the US Department of State that they have allegedly received a response from Moscow to the document that the Americans sent in reply to our initial proposals on security guarantees in Europe.

This is a misunderstanding. We started studying the US response when we received it about a week ago. It was clear from the start that the Americans prefer to focus on discussing important albeit secondary issues. They asked if it was possible to agree on the non-deployment of offensive weapons on a reciprocal basis, including medium- and shorter-range missiles that had been covered once by the INF Treaty which the US destroyed. They mentioned transparency in holding exercises, measures for avoiding unforeseen incidents between combat aircraft and ships and other confidence-building measures.

As for the key issue that prompted us to send our initiatives to the United States and NATO, their response was negative. I am referring to our demands for honest implementation of the agreements on the indivisibility of security, which were reached in the OSCE framework in Istanbul in 1999 and in Astana in 2010. These agreements not only envisage the freedom to choose alliances but also make this freedom dependent on the need to avoid any steps that would enhance security at the expense of the security of others. We saw that the US and NATO response to our key question was extremely negative. They focus only on the freedom to choose alliances and completely ignore the condition that was approved at the highest level, notably, that it is unacceptable to encroach on the security of other states in the process.

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we are also concerned over the position of other NATO countries, for instance, France. Its defence minister said not so long ago that they insist on the need to ensure security based on the documents that preceded the adoption of the Istanbul Charter and the Astana Declaration. The minister cited a document of the 1990 OSCE summit in Paris, which did not contain a demand not to enhance security at the expense of others. In other words, our Western colleagues are trying to consign to oblivion rather than simply ignore a key principle of international law accepted in the Euro-Atlantic space. To prevent this from happening, when we received Washington's response to our initial proposals, I described in detail everything we are talking about now in a separate message and sent it to all foreign ministers of the OSCE states and some other countries to familiarise them with our position.

Today, I reaffirmed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken that we won't allow this issue to be dragged out. We will insist on honest conversations and explanations of why the West does not want to honour its commitments at all, or only selectively when it benefits them. Mr Blinken agreed that this is a subject for another conversation. We will see how it goes. At present, we are completing the interdepartmental work on US proposals on other issues. We will report on them to our President.



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