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**Statement
of H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation**

**at the High Level Segment
of the 16th Session of the
United Nations Human Rights Council**

Geneva, 28 February, 2011

Dear Mr. President,
Dear Madam High Commissioner,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recent turbulent events in certain regions of the world, including the Middle East, have once again clearly demonstrated that a stable and secure world order and sustainable development should rest upon the processes of democratization and comprehensive modernization of societies. Mass protests across the Middle East and North African countries have exposed a range of problems that have piled up for decades – first of all, poverty, unemployment and unguaranteed social and economic rights in general. These problems should be addressed by the peoples of the affected countries, without any coercion or external interference, in peaceful forms and within a legal framework, through national dialogue and public consensus on the ways for long-overdue transformations.

Use of military force against civilians is unacceptable. In Libya, it caused hundreds of civilian deaths. Russia condemns such violence, demands its immediate cessation and observance of international humanitarian law. We clearly expressed our attitude towards those events in the statements by the President of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as in the Joint Russia-EU Statement of February 24, and two days ago – in the UN Security Council. We also welcome the principled stand taken by the Human Rights Council.

Democratization and modernization are the tasks faced not only by individual countries, but by the entire system of international relations as well. The realities of an emerging new fairer polycentric world require the development of multilateral institutions which should promote equitable cooperation and joint search for solutions to emerging problems. These solutions should strengthen the global rule of law, ensure democratic procedures both in domestic and international affairs and contribute to general observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universal instruments, as well as reveal the creative potential of civil society and help increase its responsibility.

The UN Human Rights Council has been established as one of such institutions. While formulating the goals for the Council five years ago, we believed that human rights were a cornerstone of the current world order and UN activities, along with security and development. Resolution 60/251 of the UN General Assembly establishing the Council declared such principles as equitable dialogue, elimination of double standards and improper use of human rights arguments to advance narrow political interests, equal attention to all human rights categories, broadening understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions on the basis of common human rights values and with due account for national and regional particularities. The procedure of such an effective and equitable monitoring mechanism as the Universal Periodic

Review that has already proven its relevance had been agreed upon. The Russian Federation has undergone this procedure and is taking steps towards incorporating the received recommendations into its continued national efforts to protect human rights and develop civil society. We are expecting from all other countries to take such recommendations by the Human Rights Council very seriously too.

The adoption of the Code of Conduct has strengthened the framework for functioning of the Council's special procedures such as special rapporteurs, special representatives, experts and working groups. This body has indeed changed its working style, which is now characterized by broad-based dialogue, the involvement of the countries concerned and search for consensus.

In the past period, the Council has demonstrated its viability and its capacity to take effective decisions in the interests of ensuring human rights. We believe it is of vital importance to continue improving the Council's working methods and prevent politicization of the human rights issues or their use as an instrument of political pressure. The attempts to divide States into "bad" and "good" or "pupils" and "tutors" and to dilute the interstate character of the Council are counter-productive and can only harm multilateral cooperation.

These issues require increased attention in the context of the on-going HRC review. We should see our main task - to preserve constructive potential and positive atmosphere, which were so hard to achieve. The Council should not shy away from difficult issues, but some of them should be approached on a stage-by-stage basis, without "mounted attacks", to avoid a negative impact on the process of building mutual confidence.

If everyone is interested in achieving concrete results in the form of the real improvement of the human rights situation, that is the approach we should adopt. If, however, somebody's main concern is to get a broader mass-media coverage, that has to do with public relations rather than cooperation.

Last year, we celebrated 65th anniversaries of two key events in the recent history of mankind – the Great Victory in World War II and the establishment of the Nuremberg International Tribunal for the prosecution of major Nazi criminals.

The tragedy of that war has convinced the world leaders in the need to establish the United Nations. The UN Charter has become a cornerstone of modern international law, a fundamental code of conduct for States and multilateral organizations, and laid down the foundation for the current system of the promotion and protection of human rights. Provisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal Charter were also supported by the UN General Assembly in its decisions as universally recognized principles of international law which provided a basis for the further development of the norms on war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide, and for defining constituent elements of the crime of aggression.

We all share the duty to carefully protect this international legal foundation of the current relations between States in its integrity. This foundation has been painfully worked out by peoples as a main lesson of World War II. Political speculations and attempts to revise its genesis, nature and consequences, to equate victims and butchers, liberators and aggressors in their rights, and to challenge the outcomes of the Nuremberg Tribunal are inadmissible. Such actions represent nothing less but mockery of the memory of millions of people of all nations fallen in the fight against Nazism and create a breeding ground for new ideologies of hatred. At the Russia's initiative the UN General Assembly adopts every year a resolution calling for the suppression of such attempts. Regrettably, several countries, including the members of the anti-Hitler coalition, feel shy to support it, alluding to the freedom of expression. We regard this position as highly dangerous. Everyone must remember, to what such "shyness" led in the 1930-s.

We are convinced that today one of the main tasks of the international community is to prevent and suppress ethnic and religious extremism, manifestations of racism and racial discrimination, as well as overcoming xenophobia and intolerance. The Durban Declaration and documents of the 2009 Review Conference, in adoption of which Russia has played a leading role, could serve as a resource in this job.

I would like to emphasize the necessity to promote an inter-faith accord. The world religious leaders should stand united against extremism and protect people suffering in conflict areas when the right to life, which is the major human right, is under threat. The situation in many regions of the world, including the Balkans, Africa, South and South East Asia and the Middle East, urgently demands a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to accommodate the religious factor. As for the fate of Jerusalem, that factor is a decisive one. Russia has been consistently advancing proposals on establishing an interreligious dialogue within the framework of the UN, Council of Europe or UNESCO, in which we expect support from our partners.

We are interested in broadening human rights dialogue and cooperate actively with relevant treaty bodies, HRC special procedures and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The recent visit to Russia by High Commissioner Ms. Navi Pillay has taken place in a constructive and business-like manner. During her meeting with President Dmitry Medvedev and senior officials of many ministries and departments, she discussed specific ways of further strengthening our interaction.

Moscow appreciated the interest expressed by Ms. Navi Pillay towards our steps aimed at reforming the judicial system and involving civil society in the process of elaborating State's decisions on the protection of vulnerable social groups.

All those things are an integral part of the comprehensive modernization program that, as it was stressed by President Dmitry Medvedev, will be based on democratic values and institutions.

If we want human rights to become an integral part of our life, it is necessary to take a fresh look at their moral dimension. This dimension incorporated a set of traditional values that had found their reflection in all world religions, various cultures and customs. It concerns such everlasting categories as human dignity, responsibility, justice, freedom, labor, and family. These moral categories have been developing for millennia, are the pillars of various societies and should consolidate nations, peoples and ethnic groups. The objective nexus between human rights and traditional values of humanity should contribute to strengthening further universalization of the concept of human rights.

Russia initiated in the United Nations system a discussion on this topic, to which many States responded with interest. At the present session of the UN Human Rights Council we, together with the co-sponsors, will table a draft resolution on the subject. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Thank you.