Dear Ann Linde,

You are aware that Russia is seriously concerned about increasing politico-military tensions in the immediate vicinity of its Western borders. With a view to avoiding any further escalation, the Russian side presented on 15 December 2021 the drafts of two interconnected international legal documents – a Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on security guarantees and an Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The U.S. and NATO responses to our proposals received on 26 January 2022 demonstrate serious differences in the understanding of the principle of equal and indivisible security that is fundamental to the entire European security architecture. We believe it is necessary to immediately clarify this issue, as it will determine the prospects for future dialogue.

The Charter for European security signed at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999 formulated key rights and obligations of the OSCE participating states with respect to indivisibility of security. It underscored the tight of each participating state to be free to choose or change its security arrangements including treaties of alliances, as they evolve, as well as the right of the state to neutrality. The same paragraph of the Charter directly conditions those rights on the obligation of each state not to strengthen its security of other states. It says further that no state, group of states or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence.

At the OSCE summit in Astana in December 2010, the leaders of our nations approved a declaration that reaffirmed this comprehensive package of interconnected obligations.

However, the Western countries continue to pull out of it only those elements that suit them, and namely – the right of state to be free to choose alliances for ensuring exclusively their own security. The words 'as they evolve' are shamefacedly omitted, because this provision was also integral part of the understanding of "invisible security", and specifically in the sense that military alliances must abandon their initial deterrence function and integrate into the all European architecture based on collective approaches, rather than as narrow groups. The principle of indivisible security is selectively interpreted as a justification for the ongoing course towards irresponsible expansion of NATO.

It is revealing that Western representatives, while expressing their readiness to engage in dialogue on the European security architecture, deliberately avoid making reference to the Charter for European security and the Astana declaration in their comments. They mention only earlier OSCE documents, particularly often – the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe that does not contain the increasingly "inconvenient" obligation not to strengthen own security at the expense of the security of other state. Western capitals also attempt to ignore a key OSCE document – the 1994 Code of conduct on politico-military aspects of security, which clearly says that the states will choose their security arrangements, including membership in alliances, "bearing in mind the legitimate security concerns of the states".

It will not work that way. The very essence of the agreements on indivisible security is that either there is security for all or there is no security for anyone. The Istanbul Charter provides that each OSCE participating state has equal right to security, and not only NATO countries that interpret this right as an exceptional privilege of membership in the "exclusive" North Atlantic club.

I will not comment on other NATO guidelines and actions that reflect the aspiration of the "defensive" bloc to military supremacy and the use of force bypassing the prerogatives of the U.N. Security Council. Suffice it to say that such actions contravene the fundamental all-European obligations including the commitments under the aforementioned documents to maintain only such military capabilities that are commensurate with individual or collective security needs, taking into account the obligations under international law, as well as the legitimate security interests of other states.

Discussing the present situation in Europe, our colleagues from the United States, NATO and the European Union make constant appeals for "de-escalation" and call to Russia to "choose a path of diplomacy". We want to remind: we have been moving along that path for decades. The kay milestones, such as the documents of the Istanbul and Astana summits, are exactly the direct result of diplomacy. The very fact that the West now tries to revise to its benefit these diplomatic achievements of the leaders of all OSCE countries raises serious concern. The situation demands a frank clarification of positions.

We want to receive a clear answer to the question how our partners understand their obligation not to strengthen their own security at the expense of the security of other states on the basis of the commitment to the principles of indivisible security. How specifically does your government intend to fulfill this obligation in practical terms in the current circumstances? If you renege on this obligation, we ask you to clearly state that.

Without having full clarity on this key issue related to the interconnection of right and obligations approved at the highest level, it is impossible to ensure the balance of interests embodied in the instruments of the Istanbul and Astana summits. Your response will help to better understand the extent of the ability of our partners to remain faithful to their commitments, as well as the prospects for

common progress toward decreasing tensions and strengthening European security.

We look forward to your prompt reply. It should not take long as the point is to clarify the understanding on the basis of which your Prime minister signed the corresponding obligations.

We also expect that the response to this letter will be given in the nation capacity, as the aforementioned commitments were undertaken by each of our stat individually and not within any bloc or in the name thereof.

Sincerely,

Sergey Lavrov