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**THE IDEA OF MULTILATERALISM AS THE LEADING TREND IN
THE WORLD TRANSFORMATION**

I'm so happy, so moved to be back to my home university.

So thank you for inviting me and thank you for attending this plenary session when I want to share with you some thoughts of how the future should be formed together.

So thank you very much.

Excellency Professor Alexander Zapesotskiy my dear friend.

Excellency, colleagues, distinguished participants, but most of them thank you, all the students that are listening to us, to the old generation, still a generation that is working, but you are not the generation of the future.

You are already the generation of the present.

So continue to study, to form, to train, and to revolt to make a better future.

Thank you to the students.

It is an immense pleasure, as I said, to be back to this beautiful city of St. Petersburg, where history and culture meets beauty and grace.

I'm also privileged to be back here to the University of Humanities and Social Sciences, with the icon that I say, my second home university.

So my warm thanks to the government of Russia, and particularly to my dear friend, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Vershinin.

And of course, my dear friend Alexander Sabotowskiy, the architect behind this significant conference.

Probably most of you as students at St. Petersburg University may not be aware that more than a decade ago, I honored by receiving an honorary doctorate from the Stem University.

I had been coming here every year since 2015, with the exception of the few years yet due to COVID and crisis.

Prior to my arrival here, just two weeks ago, I was going through the booklet that highlights the takeaways of the previous conferences since 2015.

And I have to confess that I have the sense of pride, thinking to myself that this circle, our circle of great minds, were very insightful into the future.

Our wish or predication about war were hidden.

Back then, we were debating a transition era.

Today, it's no longer the case.

Today, we are on a transformation mode.

Transformation means hope for the better, but only if we learn from the past mistakes.

The Likhachev Scientific Conference is a forum that continues to provide intellectual space for critical reflection on the world we inhabit.

And the one we aspire to shape.

The theme of this year's conference, and I quote, transforming the world, problems and prospect, compels all of us to confront a paradox.

We possess today more tools, knowledge and connectivity than ever, that any point in the history, yet we are grappling with a deep crisis of trust, legitimacy and cohesion in our global system.

I come here today as a United Nations senior official, leading the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, that some of you are aware of this mission of work.

My entity provides a global platform for dialogue, and a bridge between culture and civilization and religion.

I speak from within an institution that has been built in the aftermath of war, on the promise of a collective security system, I repeat, a collective security system.

The international law and the dignity for all people.

In 2025, the UN will mark its 80th anniversary.

That milestone offers not only a moment of commemoration, but one of record.

We must ask ourselves, what does multilateralism mean in today?

And more important, what it becomes to remain relevant tomorrow?

The global context has shifted dramatically.

The post-war optimism of the 1990s has faded.

In its place, we face a landscape defined by the political reveries, resurgent nationalism, and a growing contest over narrative, values, and influence.

New exits of tension intersecting with old fault lines, and multilateralism is often caught in this crossfire.

My friends, the multilateral system, including the United Nations, is not immune to the crisis around it.

It reflects and sometimes amplifies the division among member states.

The Security Council is often gridlocked.

Multilateral agreements are undermined by selective implementation.

Norms are contested and at times ignored altogether.

This erosion is not theoretical.

It has real war consequences for conflict prevention, human rights, climate change, pandemic preparedness, and the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Yet we must be clear-eyed.

It's not the idea of multilateralism that has failed us.

It is our collective inability or unwillingness to empower and modernize it.

We face a deficit not of a structure, but a deficit of solidarity.

We need a reinvigorated multilateralism, one that is inclusive, representative, democratic, and effective.

One that is anchored not in power politics, but in shared principles of mutual accountability.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, the case for multilateralism today is not merely aspirational.

It is existential.

Our world is multipolar.

Nobody denies that.

We are not bipolar or tripolar.

We are in a world multipolar.

So no single nation or bloc can unilaterally solve the transactional challenges we face, from climate change to pandemic, from civil insecurity to mass displacement.

Revival of multilateralism means creating a space where geopolitical competition doesn't entirely exclude cooperation.

It means safeguarding the institutional agreements that have prevented large-scale war for decades.

It means returning to the idea that our fate are intertwined and that in the connected world, the insecurity of one is the insecurity of all.

To be effective, multilateralism must evolve between ritual diplomacy and mass-delivered results, especially for those who have long been marginalized by the global order.

That means reforming outdated structures, including the Security Council, to reflect contemporary realities.

It means rebalancing the international financial system to give fairer votes and access to a developing economy.

It means investing in multilateral mechanisms that are agile, representative, and grounded in the principle for equity and justice.

We must also ensure that multilateralism is not reduced to the domain of state alone.

Global cooperation must embrace the full spectrum of new actors, civil society, local communities, youth, students, religious leaders, scientists, indigenous people, and the private sector.

These voices bring legitimacy, innovation, and proximity into the ground, and they are indispensable in shaping truly inclusive global solutions.

At the heart of the United Nations lies a fundamental belief that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the creation of justice, dignity, and dialogue.

Today, this belief is under household.

In this context, to put secular general position, I reiterate there is no alternative to constructive dialogue.

Yes, my friend, around the world we see conflict multiplying, many of them protracted, complex, and marked by deep civilian suffering.

We see the north of international humanitarian law being eroded, and the space for impartial mediation shrinking.

In some cases, diplomacy dismissed as weakness.

In others, it is weaponized.

In this context, I support secular general position regarding war in Ukraine.

I reiterate that there is no alternative to constructive dialogue.

Elsewhere, the ongoing tragic humanitarian situation in Gaza is totally unacceptable.

The images that we see on our TV screens are heartbreaking, and evoke our humanity to bring it to an end.

A durable peace in the region is only attainable through the two-state solution.

Two-state solution means the state of Israel and the state of Palestine.

In this environment, the role of UN and of multilateral forum, more broadly, must be reclaimed as a space for honest, principled dialogue.

We must defend the idea that dialogue is not a concession, but a responsibility.

That diplomacy is not naive, but necessary.

It's through person-dialogue, often quite painstakingly imperfect, that ceasefire are broken, accepted humanitarian relief is secured, and the seeds of reconciliation are planted.

The UN effort to mediate, deploy peace mission, and support national reconciliation processes are far from being perfect.

But they remain among the few channels where all voices, however divided, can still meet.

We must strengthen these channels, not abandon them.

Moreover, we must be willing to engage with the root of conflict.

Exclusion, historical grievances, resource inequality and impunity, peace cannot be imposed.

It must be nurtured through truth, justice, and inclusive governance.

Distinguished friends and participants, the United Nations Charter begins with this.

We, the people.

Yes, we, the people.

Any conversation about transformation must confront the twin issues of inequality and double standards.

Both have become fault lines that undermine the legitimacy of global governance, let alone are strictly in violation of what our foundational Charter stands for.

Across many regions, inequality continues to fuel resentment, distract and instability, whether they accept to vaccine, climate change, or decision-making power.

Disparities remain stark.

Structural economic imbalances exacerbated by debt, illicit flows, and equal trade continue to constrain development and opportunity to the global South.

At the same time, the perception of reality and double standards erode faith in international institutions.

The selective application of international law, inconsistent media narrative, and even humanitarian responses send a damaging message that some lives, voices, and borders matter more than others.

To transform the world, my friends, we must begin by transforming this mindset.

We must commit to a truly universal application of principle, wherever international law applies equally, where human rights are not politicized, and where every country, regardless of size or power, has a mini seat at the table.

Moving forward, as we prepare to mark the eighty anniversary of the United Nations, we are being called as an international community to walk the talk on the pledges we made to peace, security, development, and human rights.

Yes, my dear friends, there are for me three main challenges in front of us.

First, peace.

Without peace, there will not be security.

Only security, and then peace.

They will not bring peace and no security.

So the first priority, the only priority at this time, is to make peace.

Second, sustainable development.

Just sustainable development for all countries and nations.

Third, the new and emerging challenge posed by unguarded artificial intelligence.

We cannot accept that our lives will be controlled and led by algorithms.

Algorithms should be replaced by algoethics, as Pope Francis said.

Artificial intelligence is important, but only when it is human centered.

Distinguished guests, moving forward, ambition alone is not enough.

Let's walk that path together with courage and collective resolve.

We need the courage to act in good faith, the wisdom to prioritize the common good, and humility to listen.

Despite the daunting challenges, I remain hopeful as I see young people mobilizing across borders.

I see scientists collaborating across disciplines.

I see artists, educators, elders, and community all working to preserve our shared humanity.

The demand for transformation is not only coming from conference halls and political chambers.

It is rising from the ground up.

We only have given these voices the space.

Transformation at this conference reminds us it was a challenge and an opportunity.

It asks us not only to critique what is, but to imagine what could be, and to work tirelessly towards this vision.

Let us choose cooperation over confrontation.

Let us choose equity over exclusion.

Let us choose dialogue over division and peace over posturing.

Let us remember, as Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote, the mystery of human assistance lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.

It is that something we all build on mutual respect, shared divinity, and human hope that through collective action we can transform not only our system, but ourselves.

Thank you.