

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

To the Participants in and Guests of the St. Petersburg First Forum on Global Health

I am delighted to welcome the participants and guests of your representative Forum.

In today's globalization-driven world, health issues are moving to the forefront of the international agenda. The agenda of controlling dangerous infectious diseases was among the key topics of Russia's G8 chairmanship in 2006, reflecting the recognition of public health as a key contributor to sustainable development.

Measures that G8 and the global community as a whole are presently devising are intended to improve comprehensive monitoring of potential epidemics, speed up progress in medical sciences, and bolster public health systems in the developing countries.

I feel confident that, by pooling our efforts, we will succeed in reaching a new, higher standard of health, in making peoples' lives longer and happier.

I wish you fruitful work and all the best.

/s/

S. Lavrov

Moscow, May __, 2007

Address by M.Ye. Sevostyanov,
Deputy Director of the International Organizations Department,
at the Global Health Forum (St. Petersburg, May 21-22)

Distinguished participants in the Forum,

Ladies and gentlemen,

To begin, I would like to thank this Forum's organizers for their efforts that have made it possible for us to meet in this auditorium to discuss the highly important topic of securing global health.

Global health issues have been climbing the ladder of priorities on the international agenda. This stems from the recognition of the true role of public health as a key driver of sustainable development and better quality of living.

In this area, there are some impressive examples of effective international cooperation: the disease of smallpox has been eradicated and, hopefully, polio will be finally vanquished in the coming years.

Nevertheless, epidemics of diseases, old and new, continue to exact a huge economic toll and impede the positive momentum of globalization. To date, the international community has been unable to as much as contain the proliferating epidemics of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. So far, the probabilities of yet another avian flu outbreak and new human flu pandemic cannot be gauged with sufficient accuracy.

Against this backdrop, we are witnessing a steadily growing awareness that, in an interdependent world, it would take consolidated efforts of the entire international community and all health stakeholders to address health issues and, even more so, to fight contagious diseases.

This was the rationale that prompted Russia, in the course of its G8 chairmanship last year, to propose that the gamut of key issues related to containing infectious diseases be added as a priority topic to the agenda of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg.

Measures proposed by G8 seek to bolster the effectiveness of efforts at suppressing epidemics of dangerous diseases and beefing up the readiness of public health and other services in the event of unforeseen crises affecting human health.

First and foremost, the mechanisms of monitoring dangerous infectious outbreaks and providing emergency responses to such outbreaks need strengthening. Nipping an emerging threat in the bud would substantially mitigate risks to human health, reduce the burden on the public health system, and put the limited professional and material resources to a more sustainable use.

Great significance is attached to rolling back three major epidemics, namely AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. During last year's G8 meeting, the leaders of the world's leading nations reiterated their commitment to making AIDS prevention and treatment universally available by 2010.

The Russian Federation has been steadily building up its donor potential and stepping up its efforts towards a national mechanism for development assistance. Immediately following the G8 summit meeting in St. Petersburg, this country set about translating into reality its commitments to assist the multilateral campaign against infectious diseases.

Currently, the establishment of a Russia-based Regional Coordinating Center for East European and Central Asian nations is under consideration with a view to developing an HIV vaccine. The Regional Center is expected to commence active operations as early as this year.

The Russian Federation has commenced negotiations with the WHO to have the Government-run 'Vector' Science Center in Novosibirsk certified as a WHO influenza cooperation hub for Central Asian countries.

In December 2006, the Russian Federal Government adopted a resolution that authorizes funding for the performance of its reimbursement commitments whereby, in 2007-2010, the federal budget is to reimburse all expenses of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria associated with the implementation of the Fund's projects in Russia, for a total of US\$ 217 million.

Furthermore, US\$10 million will be disbursed from the federal budget by way of Russia's voluntary contribution to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative Fund.

As Russia's contribution to the international campaign against avian flu and in preparation for a flu pandemic, cooperation agreements on avian flu monitoring have been concluded with the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. Modern lab sets have been supplied to the Ukraine and Kazakhstan to perform virology tests.

In addition, a decision has been made to allocate US\$20 million to assist African nations in their fight against malaria.

A voluntary contribution of US\$80 million has been made by way of Russia's participation in a pilot project under the 2010-2019 Initiative on Tentative Commitment for Vaccine Procurement. That Initiative provides for greater access for the poorest countries, mostly African sub-Saharan nations, to mass-scale vaccination of their population.

All in all, in 2006-2010, Russia's total contribution to the international efforts at containing proliferation of infectious diseases may reach US\$500 million.

All such initiatives are being implemented in close cooperation with the WHO and other relevant international organizations.

We believe that, through concerted actions, we will be able to attain a qualitatively higher standard of public health and help make peoples' lives longer, happier, and more fulfilled.