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**The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation approved
by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin
of November 30, 2016**

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II. Modern World and Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation

4. The world is currently going through fundamental changes related to the emergence of a multipolar international system. The structure of international relations is becoming increasingly complex. Globalization has led to the formation of new centres of economic and political power. Global power and development potential is becoming decentralized, and is shifting towards the Asia-Pacific Region, eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers. Cultural and civilizational diversity of the world and the existence of multiple development models have been clearer than ever.

5. Tensions are rising due to disparities in global development, the widening prosperity gap between States and growing competition for resources, access to markets and control over transport arteries. This competition involves not only human, research and technological capabilities, but has been increasingly gaining a civilizational dimension in the form of duelling values. Against this backdrop, attempts to impose values on others can stoke xenophobia, intolerance and conflict in international affairs, leading ultimately to chaos and an uncontrolled situation in international relations. Consequently, preventing fault lines from emerging in relations between civilizations and promoting partnerships across cultures, religions and civilizations are regarded as priorities for a harmonious development of humankind. The attempts made by western powers to maintain their positions in the world, including by imposing their point of view on global processes and conducting a policy to contain alternative centres of power, leads to a greater instability in international relations and growing turbulence on the global and regional levels. The struggle for dominance in shaping the key principles of the future international system has become a key trend at the current stage of international development.

²⁵⁴ Introduction has been omitted.

6. Force is becoming an increasingly important factor in international relations amid escalating political, social and economic contradictions and growing uncertainty in the global political system and economy. Efforts to expand and upgrade military capabilities and to create and deploy new types of weapons undermine strategic stability and pose a threat to global security which is underwritten by a system of arms control treaties and agreements. Although a large-scale war, including nuclear war, between major powers remains unlikely, they face increased risks of being drawn into regional conflicts and escalating crises.

7. Existing military and political alliances are not capable of countering the full range of challenges and threats the world is currently facing. As people and States become increasingly interconnected, attempts to ensure stability and security within a single territory are doomed to fail. The universal principle of equal and indivisible security has special significance and relevance for the Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian and Asia-Pacific regions, among others. Network diplomacy has gained prominence as a flexible approach to participating in multilateral mechanisms for the sake of finding effective solutions to common issues.

8. Alongside military might, other important factors allowing States to influence international politics are taking centre stage, including economic, legal, technological and IT capabilities. Using these capabilities to pursue geopolitical interests is detrimental to efforts to find ways to settle disputes and resolve the existing international issues by peaceful means on the basis of the norms of international law.

9. In addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, “soft power” has become an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives. This primarily includes the tools offered by civil society, as well as various methods and technologies—from information and communication, to humanitarian and other types.

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14. The growing threat of international terrorism is one of the most dangerous realities in today’s world. The spread of extremist ideology and the activity of terrorist groups in a number of regions (primarily, in the Middle East and North Africa) are the result of systemic development problems that globalization processes have laid bare. External interference has also played a major role. Combined, these two factors have led to the destruction of traditional governance

²⁵⁵ Section concerning economic problems has been omitted.

and security mechanisms and the illegal spread of weapons and ammunition at an even larger scale. The ideological values and prescriptions imposed from outside these countries in an attempt to modernize their political systems have exacerbated the negative response of their societies to current challenges. Extremist forces have exploited these trends using distorted interpretations of religious values to promote violence in pursuit of their goals in the political, interethnic and interreligious rivalry they are engaged in.

15. The global terrorist threat has reached a new high with the emergence of the Islamic State international terrorist organization and similar groups that have descended to an unprecedented level of cruelty in their violence. They aspire to create their own state and seek to consolidate their influence on a territory stretching from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to Pakistan. The main effort in combating terrorism should be aimed at creating a broad international counter-terrorist coalition with a solid legal foundation, one that is based on effective and consistent inter-State cooperation without any political considerations or double standards, above all to prevent terrorism and extremism and counter the spread of radical ideas.

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21. Russia conducts an assertive and independent foreign policy guided by its national interests and based on unconditional respect for international law. Russia is fully aware of its responsibility to support peace and security in the world both at the global and regional levels and is committed to working with all interested States to address common challenges.

22. Russia's foreign policy is open and predictable. It is characterized by consistency and continuity and reflects the unique role Russia has played for centuries as a counterbalance in international affairs and the development of global civilization.

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IV. Regional Foreign Policy Priorities of the Russian Federation

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61. Systemic problems in the Euro-Atlantic region that have accumulated over the last quarter century are manifested in the geopolitical expansion pursued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) along with their

²⁵⁶ Section concerning cross-border problems has been omitted.

²⁵⁷ Section on general foreign policy priorities has been omitted.

²⁵⁸ Section concerning CIS territory has been omitted.

refusal to begin implementation of political statements regarding the creation of a common European security and cooperation framework, have resulted in a serious crisis in the relations between Russia and the Western States. The containment policy adopted by the United States and its allies against Russia, and political, economic, information and other pressure Russia is facing from them undermine regional and global stability, are detrimental to the long-term interests of all sides and run counter to the growing need for cooperation and addressing transnational challenges and threats in today's world.

62. Russia's long-term Euro-Atlantic policy is aimed at building a common space of peace, security and stability based on the principles of indivisible security, equal cooperation and mutual trust. Russia is a consistent advocate of transforming political declarations regarding indivisibility of security irrespective of States' affiliation with political and military alliances into legally binding obligations.

63. The EU remains an important trade and economic and foreign policy partner for Russia. The Russian Federation is interested in constructive, stable and predictable cooperation with EU countries based on the principles of equality and respect for each other's interests. Further development of relations with the EU implies improving the legal contractual framework, as well as institutional cooperation mechanisms so as to ensure mutual benefit and the best possible configuration of partnership ties, including in the energy segment. Russia's strategic priority in its relations with the EU is to establish a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific by harmonizing and aligning interests of European and Eurasian integration processes, which is expected to prevent the emergence of dividing lines on the European continent.

64. The Russian Federation is committed to maintaining intensive and mutually beneficial dialogue with the EU on key items on the foreign policy agenda, as well as further promoting practical cooperation on foreign policy, military and political issues. There is potential for Russia and the EU to step up combined efforts to counter terrorism, uncontrolled and illegal migration, as well as organized crime, including human trafficking, illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, arms and explosives, and cybercrime.

65. The visa regime remains one of the main barriers to expanding contacts between Russia and the EU. Reciprocal removal of visa requirements on a stage-by-stage basis is expected to give strong

impetus for strengthening Russia-EU economic, humanitarian, cultural and educational cooperation and ties in other areas.

66. Stepping up mutually beneficial bilateral ties with the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Italian Republic, the Kingdom of Spain and other European countries has substantial potential in terms of promoting Russia's national interests in European and world affairs.

67. Russia will continue its work within the Council of Europe as an independent universal European organization with a mandate to provide for a single legal and humanitarian space on the continent through its unique convention mechanisms.

68. Russia views the OSCE as an important mechanism for building an equitable and indivisible system of pan-European security, and is interested in strengthening its role and authority. Setting clear priorities, primarily regarding countering transnational challenges and threats, as well as drafting the OSCE Charter and reforming its executive bodies with a view to ensuring appropriate prerogatives of the collective intergovernmental bodies, are the prerequisites for making the OSCE even more relevant.

69. Russia respects the choice of European States that are not members of any military alliances. These States are making a genuine contribution to ensuring stability and security in Europe. Russia is ready to engage in constructive multi-faceted cooperation with them.

70. Russia will build its relations with NATO taking into account the degree to which the Alliance is ready to engage in equitable partnership, strictly adhere to the norms and principles of international law, take real steps towards a common space of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region based on the principles of mutual trust, transparency and predictability, to ensure the compliance by all its members with the commitment undertaken within the Russia-NATO Council to refrain from seeking to ensure one's security at the expense of the security of other States, as well as with military restraint obligations as per the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of May 27, 1997. The Russian Federation maintains its negative perspective towards NATO's expansion, the Alliance's military infrastructure approaching Russian borders, and its growing military activity in regions neighbouring Russia, viewing them as a violation of the principle of equal and indivisible security and leading to the deepening of old dividing lines in Europe and to the emergence of new ones.

71. Russia stands for maintaining in the north of Europe an area of trust and stability based on the principle of equal and indivisible security. To these ends, Russia develops practical cooperation with North European countries, including by implementing joint projects within multilateral frameworks, with due consideration of environmental aspects and interests of indigenous peoples. Russia's participation in the activities of the Council of the Baltic Sea States plays an important role. Russia advocates the further unleashing of the project potential of the Northern Dimension and its partnerships as a platform for regional cooperation in Northern Europe.

72. The Russian Federation is interested in building mutually beneficial relations with the United States of America, taking into consideration that the two States bear special responsibility for global strategic stability and international security in general, as well as vast potential in trade and investment, scientific and technical and other types of cooperation. Russia believes that dialogue with the US on bilateral as well as international issues can advance in a steady and predictable manner only when conducted on equal footing, based on mutual trust, respect of each other's interests and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. Russia does not recognize the US policy of extraterritorial jurisdiction beyond the boundaries of international law and finds unacceptable attempts to exercise military, political, economic or any other pressure, while reserving the right to firmly respond to hostile actions, including the bolstering of national defence and taking retaliatory or asymmetrical measures.

73. Russia advocates constructive cooperation with the US in arms control, with due consideration of the inextricable link between strategic offensive and defensive warfare, and the imperative to make nuclear disarmament a multilateral process. The Russian Federation believes that talks on the further reduction of strategic offensive arms are only possible when taking into account all factors affecting global strategic stability, without exception. Russia views the creation of the global missile-defence system by the US as a threat to its national security and reserves the right to take adequate retaliatory measures.

74. Russia expects the US to strictly abide by the norms of international law, primarily those held in the UN Charter, in its actions on the international stage.

75. The Russian Federation is open to building relations with Canada based on respect for mutual interests and the experience amassed in the course of cooperation, including in the Arctic.

76. Russia pursues a policy aimed at preserving peace, stability and constructive international cooperation in the Arctic. The Russian Federation believes that the existing international legal framework is sufficient to successfully settle any regional issues through negotiation, including the issue of defining the outer limits of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean. Russia considers that the Arctic States bear special responsibility for the sustainable development of the region, and in this connection advocates enhanced cooperation in the Arctic Council, the coastal Arctic Five and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Russia will be firm in countering any attempts to introduce elements of political or military confrontation in the Arctic, and, in general, politicize international cooperation in the region. Using the Northern Sea Route as Russia's national transport route in the Arctic, as well as for transit shipments between Europe and Asia is significant for the region development.

77. The Russian Federation will continue its efforts to preserve and expand its presence in Antarctica, including through the effective use of mechanisms and procedures envisaged in the Antarctic Treaty of December 1, 1959.

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²⁵⁹ Sections concerning other countries (outside Europe and the U.S.) and regions of the world, and institutions formulating and implementing foreign policy have been omitted.

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