

Beat: Politics

SERGEY LAVROV WITH QATARI FOREIGN MINISTER KHALID BIN MOHAMMAD AL ATTIYAH

STATEMENT AT A JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE

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Our two countries meet with general regularity to maintain political contact. In August 2015, I paid a visit to Doha, and was received by His Highness the Emir and held substantive talks with my counterpart and friend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Khalid Al Attiyah. In December 2015, Mr Minister visited Moscow. We also reviewed a number of bilateral and regional issues, particularly in the context of resolving the various crises in the Middle East and North Africa.

During today's talks, Russian President Vladimir Putin and His Highness the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani confirmed their strong mutual intention to further strengthen and deepen cooperation in various fields.

Despite the modest volume of trade, both instructed their governments to follow the agreements reached last year at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

The leaders also instructed the Intergovernmental Commission to hold the next meeting this year and to ensure closer involvement of the business community based on the already established relations between the Russian Direct Investment Fund and the Qatar Investment Agency. In general, they agreed that investment cooperation between the two countries is a top priority. We are pleased to note that Russian companies such as Gazprom, Lukoil, Inter RAO, and Russian Railways have shown a direct interest in cooperating with our Qatari partners.

While discussing common objectives in the energy sector, Vladimir Putin and Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani agreed to use bilateral channels of cooperation as well as contacts between OPEC and non-member states, and the Forum of Gas Exporting Countries.

The newly-signed intergovernmental agreement on cultural cooperation is definitely a new step in the field of humanitarian cooperation, one that will give the existing contacts a system-based nature. Another agreement, the one on visa-free travel for holders of diplomatic passports, signed today by the Foreign Ministers of the two states, will certainly contribute to further development of contacts.

Traditionally, we have close ties in the field of sport. Today, Vladimir Putin and Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani confirmed a mutual willingness to continue the closest possible cooperation in this field, including in the context of preparations for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and the 2022 event in Qatar.

While discussing international issues, Vladimir Putin and Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani focused, for obvious reasons, on the cooperative effort to resolve the Syrian crisis, also as part of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), which includes both Russia and Qatar.

The heads of state reaffirmed the commitment Russia made in the Vienna Group agreements, which was secured by a UN Security Council resolution and called for creating conditions that would allow for the Syrian people to determine their own future. Russia and Qatar are hoping that, in accordance with the existing agreements and the UNSC resolution, negotiations between the government in

Damascus and the Syrian opposition will begin as soon as possible, perhaps as early as this month.

The two leaders also discussed issues related to the situation in Yemen, Libya and other countries in the Middle East.

On the whole, they confirmed a mutual focus on improving the efficiency of anti-terrorist activities as part of international efforts. They agreed on some practical steps towards this goal. Russia and Qatar will both continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the fight against terrorism.

The two leaders share the common position that for all of today's other drastic crises, we cannot forget about the Palestinian issue, the need to resume direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel based on the existing international legal framework in order to achieve a binational state settlement, to establish a Palestinian state which will live in security and peace with all its neighbours.

At the end of the talks, the Russian President and His Highness the Emir of Qatar agreed to stay in close contact on these and other issues.

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