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**Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at
Press Conference Following Ministerial Meeting of Five Arctic Coastal States,
Ilulissat, Greenland, May 28, 2008**

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At the outset, I would like to thank my Danish colleague Per Stig Moller and Prime Minister of Greenland's Home Rule Government Hans Enoksen for the hospitality and the excellent organization of joint work.

At this level the five Arctic coastal states met for the first time. I think I shall express the common opinion if I say that our meeting was substantive and useful. It has shown that we have common interests, that we have an understanding of our common responsibility for the state of affairs in the water area and on the coast of the Arctic Ocean and, what's most important, that there's the wish to meet and come to an agreement. In so doing we, of course, do not substitute for, but supplement the big, fruitful work that is being carried out in the Arctic by such intergovernmental organizations as the Arctic Council and the Barents Euroarctic Council.

Regional climate changes are setting us extensive new tasks in preventing degradation of the fragile ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean, preserving the unique national distinctiveness of the indigenous peoples and providing a decent and comfortable life for the Arctic population as a whole. At the same time, warming is opening up new possibilities, especially in the economic field. It is important to find a reasonable balance of interests: concern for the environment should not deprive the Arctic states of their natural competitive advantages.

The Declaration on the outcomes of the meeting reflects the readiness of all its participants to tackle the questions that may arise in an orderly way, on the basis of international law. This is the most reliable foundation for the maintenance of security and stability in the region.

In our opinion, Arctic cooperation is developing successfully on the whole. But there are reserves. Thus, we called on the colleagues to support the Russian initiative for creating a common system of security in the realization of economic and infrastructure projects in the Arctic, designed to prevent man-made disasters and to eliminate the consequences of emergency situations promptly and effectively. We also suggested returning to the discussion of an idea of an international search and rescue system in the Arctic, with which Russia came up several years ago.

Hopefully the accords reached will serve to strengthen further cooperation between our scientists. Russian science has a rich experience in Arctic investigations.

A considerable portion of our territory lies in the Arctic zone, and Russia itself is a part of the Arctic. The shoreline length of Russia in the Arctic Ocean reaches 20 thousand kilometers. Therefore the Arctic vector is invariably among the foreign policy priorities of the country. But we well understand that key Arctic problems bear a transboundary character and, consequently, a guarantee for their successful solution is the unification of efforts by all Arctic states.

May 29, 2008