

Medvedev's May 17 Warning

May 17—Speaking to the International Legal Forum in St. Petersburg today, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev gave the following warning, as translated on the website of the government of the Russian Federation:

I would like to emphasise that we need to act in unison against such modern global challenges as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, organised transnational crime, drug trafficking, and the threat of natural and man-made disasters. We can achieve this only through the collective efforts of states based on undeviating respect for the supremacy of law.

Many say that the international legal system has become obsolete. I have heard this said many times during my political practice. They say that its norms do not always ensure an effective response to new challenges. This is partly true, because everything eventually becomes obsolete, and the legal system is no exception. But the acute need for modernising international law does not mean that we should abandon its founding principles, which I believe is an obvious truth.

Particularly dangerous, in my view, are unilateral

actions made in violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which is the main venue where the international community brings its problems. In fact, this is the only venue we have, even though some may not like it. But it truly is the only venue. And we understand that the UN Charter calls for respecting the supreme power of law and the sovereignty of states.

One more thing that I believe is important, considering my experience in politics, is the concept of state sovereignty. It should not be undermined even if for the sake of achieving some immediate political gain, including an election to a particular post. Such attempts threaten global order. There have been many recent examples of the concept of state sovereignty being undermined. Military operations against foreign states bypassing the United Nations, declarations of illegitimacy of certain political regimes on behalf of foreign states rather than the people of the country involved, and imposing various collective sanctions, again bypassing international institutions, are some of them. This does not improve the situation in the world, while rash military interference in the affairs of another state usually results in radicals coming to power. *Such actions, which undermine state sovereignty, can easily lead to full-scale regional wars even—I am not trying to scare anyone here—with the use of nuclear weapons.* Everybody should remember this especially when we analyse the concept of state sovereignty [emphasis added].