

Russia's Collective Security Concept for the Gulf Region

Ensuring security and building confidence in the Persian Gulf is a priority of Russia's foreign policy and pressing global agenda. Given the huge hydrocarbon resources concentrated in this subregion, its strategic location and the linking waterways, the processes taking place there have an impact on international relations, as well as on global economic, energy and transport stability. Hence the need for appropriate collective efforts at the international and regional levels to promote genuine peace, good-neighbourliness and sustainable development in the Persian Gulf area.

The establishment of a subregional collective security system will serve that purpose. This includes adopting a long-term programme of joint actions to strengthen stability and security, including confidence-building measures, establishing mechanisms for dispute settlement and conflict resolution and defining the major benchmarks and parameters for the future architecture of inter-State cooperation.

Building on proposals elaborated in the late 1990s and amended in 2004, 2007 and 2019, the updated Russian security concept for the Persian Gulf area is based on the following principles.

1. The commitment of all States to international law, the fundamental provisions of the UN Charter and UN Security Council resolutions. Our common goal is a prosperous Middle East sustaining interfaith and inter-ethnic peace and coexistence. The establishment of a security system in the Gulf region is seen as an integral part of the overall effort to ensure stability in the Middle East as a whole. Key among them are provisions on respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the diversity of their socio-political structures and the resolution of internal political problems without undue external interference, within a legal framework and through comprehensive national dialogue, as an important precondition for maintaining domestic stability and interfaith harmony.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. URL: https://www.mid.ru/rossijskaa-koncepcia-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-v-zone-persidskogo-zaliva/-/asset_publisher/2IVdNGBn6g2B/content/id/3733575

2. Multilateralism as a way of ensuring the participation of all stakeholders in joint assessment of the situation and adoption and implementation of decisions. It is counterproductive to exclude any party from this process for whatever reasons.
3. The universality of the security system in the Persian Gulf. The relevant multilateral architecture is based on the principle of common and indivisible security, respect for the interests of both regional and extra-regional actors, including military, economic, energy, transport and environmental components.
4. A step-by-step movement towards an inclusive security system in the Persian Gulf, starting with addressing the most pressing and urgent problems facing the sub-region. This relates to ensuring freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, a commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and a joint struggle against today's acute challenges, above all international terrorism.
5. The principle of gradualism applies, inter alia, to the adoption of confidence-building measures and the provision of mutual security guarantees in the subregion by the Gulf countries.

Practical work on the formation of a security system in the Gulf region could begin with bilateral and multilateral stakeholder consultations involving regional and extra-regional States, the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the GCC, the LAS and the OIC. In the course of these contacts it is envisaged to establish an initiative group to develop measures in the area of regional security. The group is to agree on the geographical parameters of the future security system, the range of participants in the discussions, the agenda and other issues.

As possible steps towards implementing the principles of the Concept, Russia proposes that the States of the sub-region and extra-regional actors:

- reaffirm their commitment to comply in good faith with their international legal obligations, first and foremost rejection of the threat or use of force to resolve disputes, including territorial and border disputes, to prevent armed incidents and accidents involving military force in adjacent territories and in sea and airspace, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States of the subregion;
- develop and implement a set of collective confidence-building measures in the military field in order to ensure transparency and long-term predictability in this area (dialogue on military doctrines, subregional meetings of defence ministers, establishment of hotlines, exchange of prior notifications of military exercises and military aviation flights, exchange of observers, and exchange of information on arms supplies and on the state of their armed forces);

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. URL: https://www.mid.ru/rossijskaa-koncepcia-kollektivnoj-bezopasnosti-v-zone-persidskogo-zaliva/-/asset_publisher/2IVdNGBn6g2B/content/id/3733575

- conclude arms control agreements which include, for example, the establishment of demilitarized zones, the prevention of destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons and a balanced reduction of armed forces by all parties;
- in the context of the challenges of strengthening an NPT-based nuclear non-proliferation regime in the Middle East, take steps to make the entire Middle East region and North Africa a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;
- strengthen multilateral cooperation in the economic, humanitarian, environmental and other fields;
- seek to promote the integrated development of regional energy and transport infrastructure and communications systems;
- establish collective cooperation to protect the environment and prevent and respond to natural and man-made disasters;
- work towards a unified humanitarian environment with the establishment of regional centres to facilitate common tasks in the areas of tourism, medicine (combating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and preventing new health threats), culture and education (including training centres for key and promising industries in the subregion countries);
- conclude agreements on combating international terrorism, illicit arms trafficking and migration, drug trafficking and organized crime.

Russia is ready to cooperate and discuss these and other constructive proposals with all interested parties in order to ensure reliable security in the Gulf region. Our strategic goal is a stable and conflict-free Middle East open to broad international co-operation.