

Recommended addressees:

- 1) Russian Academy of Science Presidium members
- 2) Officials in the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education
- 3) Rectors of leading universities

Dear _____

We/I are writing you to express our/my serious concern about the new visa restrictions placed on foreign scholars working in Russia.

Until the passage of the October 2007 law concerning long term, multiple entry visas, foreign scholars were able to work for an extended period of time (up to twelve months) on academic projects in Russia. The new law currently restricts their stay to 90 days out of any 180-day period, a time period that is simply not long enough for scholars to conduct serious research in Russian archives for dissertation and larger manuscript projects.

We/I understand that Russian scholars hoping to conduct research in the United States also face obstacles surrounding visa issues. Due to heightened security concerns after 9/11, Russian scholars have been forced to travel long distances for interviews at the U.S. embassy in Moscow or U.S. consulates in St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, or Vladivostok. In addition, they have often faced delays in obtaining U.S. visas, or have been turned down outright. We respectfully note, however, that Russian scholars conducting academic research in the United States are not subject to crippling time restrictions. They receive multiple entry visas that are valid for a year or longer.

With the start of new presidential administrations in both Russia and the U.S., now is the time for us to work together to facilitate academic research for scholars on both sides, based on the principle of reciprocity. We/I urgently request that Russian academic exchange visas ("nauchno-tekhnicheskie sviazi" or NTS visas) be exempted from Russia's new restrictions on visa time limits. We very much wish to help ease the process of obtaining visas for Russian scholars interested in doing research in the United States. >

Sincerely,