

Integration proceeds in line with plan

President holds working meeting with Executive Secretary of Customs Union Commission, Sergei Glaziev, discussing issues relating to Single Economic Space

"We once agreed that, a year or two down the line, you would honestly share your views on our achievements, possible successes, and failures, and would offer advice regarding Belarus' future focus," Mr. Lukashenko said, adding, "You perfectly understand that neither the Single Economic Space nor the Customs Union — in which we live at present — can exist without Belarus."

The President noted that 'Belarus would be a special state within the Single Economic Space'. "This is because its economy differs from that of Russia and Kazakhstan. These countries enjoy more natural resources, having hydrocarbon wealth which, at present, largely defines their economic development," he stressed.

Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Glaziev also discussed staffing issues in forming the Eurasian Economic Commission and its bodies: the Council and the Board. Mr. Glaziev noted that the action plan to create the Customs Union — as outlined by the heads of state back in 2007 — is now almost fully realised. "Stages and terms relating to the establishment of the single customs territory have been met, as has the action plan on introducing the Customs Code. We've completed the first stage of integration: the establishment of the Customs Union. A new stage was launched after an agreement on the Eurasian Economic Commission was signed in Moscow," he added.

Competent management to help work European-style

Alexander Lukashenko meets artistic young people



President Alexander Lukashenko visits exhibition of young authors' artistic works

By Igor Slavinsky

The event at the National Library seemed to be a logical continuation of the President's recent meetings with writers and scientists. However, there was one serious difference: on meeting grey-haired doctors of science and members of the Writers' Union, Mr. Lukashenko seriously questioned them. At the National Library, he spent more time listening. The youngsters offered many ideas but, despite the meeting lasting three and a half hours, time did not allow for all voices to be heard.

An exhibition of young-

sters' achievements was organised at the entrance to the conference hall. These included a design for a car, an architectural project for a new House of Culture for the city of Nesvizh and a 'Crucifix' sculptural composition (to honour victims of the Minsk metro terrorist act). After viewing exhibits on show, the President said, "If you're talented and determined and do not give up on your dreams, you'll be a success eventually. We won't leave such people without support in the future." He admitted that he believes money is better spent on supporting new talent and concrete

artistic projects than in distributing small sums among many groups.

Another aspect which united all those at the meeting was that they universally highlighted Belarus' support of talented young people. The list of participants — handed to journalists before the meeting — indicated that almost all of the 42 youngsters present were scholarship holders of the Special Fund of the President of Belarus for Support of the Talented Youth. "We have almost two thousand in total; we've raised a new generation of artistic intelligentsia," Mr. Lukashenko explained.

Belarus has established careful infrastructure for supporting talented children — including over 100 pre-school educational centres, 29 lyceums, 215 gymnasiums, and dozens of thousands of clubs uniting youngsters through their interests. The country has preserved a successful system of art education, embracing arts schools and universities. Most importantly, all are open to anyone with talent and the desire to succeed.

"You all wish to live as they do in Europe," the President told not only those present at the National Library but all talented youngsters coun-

trywide. "It's no bad thing but, to achieve this, you need to work European-style — where success relies both on artistic ability and competent management. We are yet to achieve a worthy level in the latter." With this in mind, Mr. Lukashenko wishes to encourage sponsorship. Much has been done in this field already, with laws adopted not long ago. Culture Minister Pavel Latushko explains that, this year, much non-budgetary money has been attracted for various festivals, although such sponsorship is yet to become common here (as noted by the young people).

The outflow of young specialists is another problem, as theatre director Tatiana Troyanovich commented. She notes that potential colleagues have left the country, with Russia and Europe offering better salaries. The Presidential Press Service distributed briefing papers among journalists which stated that, since summer, 14 people have left the Belarusian Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre (last year, only 3 people left). However, at the meeting, ballet dancers and opera singers expressed their gratitude for the restoration of their theatre, which has inspired their artistic development. In fact, tickets for traditional ballet and opera performances sell out very quickly.

"The state is ready to give you a fishing rod but you must be prepared to fish," Mr. Lukashenko said. Speaking of a fishing rod, he explained that he primarily meant the creation of conditions for talented young people to receive an education and undertake further creative work.

Efforts should be global

Belarus participates in forum on experience exchange in creating nuclear weapon free zones

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Austria, the Permanent Representative of Belarus in Vienna, Valery Voronetsky, has led a delegation to the forum on the *Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones*.

Belarus is eager to support global efforts to create nuclear weapon free zones — in particular, in the Middle East. The country believes that a stage-by-stage approach is needed, to account for the interests of all parties and the development of the situation in the region. The Belarusian delega-

tion drew attention to the complementarity of peaceful settlement processes and the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. Both processes could be carried out simultaneously.

Belarus' stance is based on the gradual reduction of the role of nuclear weapons as a guarantee of national security. In the early 1990s, the country rejected the possession of nuclear weapons, making a great contribution to national, regional and international security. Where countries have kept their nuclear weapons, it's a priority for them to follow legal obligations to ensure the security of non-nuclear states. This approach could be applied in the Middle East, making it possible to expand a nuclear free zone there.

The forum, chaired by Norway, included members of the IAEA Directorate, representatives of diplomatic missions and foreign ministries of IAEA member states, and corresponding departments of foreign ministries. Reports were presented by representatives of nuclear weapon free zones in Latin America, Africa, South East Asia, the Pacific Region and Central Asia. They were joined by the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and by the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). Experience was shared regarding the creation of such zones and the negotiation process. Representatives of Middle Eastern countries and other states took part in an open discussion.

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