

Belarus hasn't made serious mistakes in its foreign policy

Alexander Lukashenko states that there are no obvious errors in Belarusian foreign policy

By Vasily Mishutin

"I should note that we've made no serious mistakes or failures in our foreign policy which could have negatively influenced the fate of our state," noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, at a ceremony to present Vladimir Makei as the new Foreign Minister.

Speaking of his decision to relieve Sergei Martynov of the post, replacing him with Mr. Makei, the President explains, "I didn't investigate thoroughly the reaction of our opponents or supporters but wish to voice my position. Having worked as Minister for Foreign Affairs for almost ten years, Sergei Martynov recently expressed his wish to change roles. This step [dismissal] was taken at his initiative and, from my point of view, seemed a good idea — especially in its motivation."

Mr. Lukashenko admitted that he gave great thought as to whom to appoint as the new Foreign Minister. He also added, "It's of no minor importance to me where Mr. Martynov will work next; he is a personal friend and a friend of the state." The President continued, "He's done a great deal to shape our foreign political and economic department and is a reasonable man. He has never tried my patience, through his actions or behaviour. Moreover, I've encouraged him to work in untraditional areas, where analysis has been vital."

The President noted that the achievements of the Ministry were the result of team work, led by Mr. Martynov. "Having a new Minister,



Alexander Lukashenko appoints Vladimir Makei as new Foreign Minister

you'll probably be motivated in a way needed not only in the field of foreign policy but of domestic policy," Mr. Lukashenko said, addressing Foreign Ministry representatives. "The quality and the efficiency of your work will determine how our young sovereign state is perceived globally — particularly in certain areas of the world," stressed the President.

Speaking of the new Minister, Mr. Lukashenko reminded everyone that Mr. Makei has made a name for himself not only within the Foreign Ministry at an early age but has worked in our embassies abroad. He added that 'we should probably have used his potential wider in our foreign policy'. He continued, "It's no secret that I involved him in some foreign politi-

cal initiatives. At my order, he met various heads in the West and East, doing his best to normalise our relations during the most acute times — especially in the West. He did this successfully."

During the ceremony, the President awarded Mr. Martynov with an Order of the Fatherland of the 3rd Degree, for his many years of work in the field of foreign policy and for his contribution to the development of Belarus' international relations.

Mr. Lukashenko outlined the Ministry's major tasks for the coming year.

Promoting the state's foreign economic interests

Taking into account the open nature of the Belarusian economy, success in this area

is important for the sustainability of the state and the well-being of Belarusian citizens. The dynamics of foreign trade figures and the volume of attracted investments should be the major focus of every Belarusian.

Finding new partners and trade diversification

It's worth looking closely again at a map of the globe, to see where we can enhance our competitiveness via our diplomatic presence, promoting our goods and services and attracting investments and technologies.

Foreign ministry work and that of embassies

It's necessary to relieve diplomats of unnecessary

red tape, giving them time for initiatives and projects rather than reports and plans. Diplomats should not act as mere 'postmen', formally distributing correspondence between Belarusian and foreign partners. Their task is to analyse information, proposing decisions which serve Belarus' interests to the utmost.

Information work

There's no need to be afraid of singing the praises of Belarus — despite criticism. Belarus is a reliable partner: a donor of international security and stability. For a long time, we've maintained smooth transit of resources to Europe — including energy transit. We are spending a great deal on combating illegal migra-

tion, human trafficking and illicit drug and arms trafficking.

Foreign political provision for the forthcoming election campaign

The Foreign Ministry is responsible for building mutually respectful and constructive dialogue with all foreign representatives showing interest in this event, including the foreign media and observers. It is also responsible for the smooth running of voting at our foreign embassies.

Additionally, the President mentioned strategic avenues of foreign political activity. He stressed that Russia is a strategic partner and Belarus' close ally, noting that the Union State needs attention and further development. He is also keen to see favourable conditions created for Belarus' participation in the Single Economic Space and the Eurasian Union (now being formed).

The President noted that Belarus' relations with the EU could be better, "We aren't saying that everything is perfect in our country but we are ready to study all that is new and advanced. However, we want to do this without external pushing, threats or blackmail. Our national psyche makes it impossible to 'jump over' several stages of development, to suddenly embrace 'a happy democratic future'. Every state must develop in a steady, evolutionary manner."

The new Foreign Minister is tasked with fulfilling these Presidential-set tasks.

Major projects target market

China keen to develop relations with Gomel Region

By Vasily Sidorov

China plans to continue developing relations with Belarus in general and with the Gomel Region in particular — in various spheres, notes the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Gong Jianwei. He met the Chairman of the Gomel Regional Executive Committee, Vladimir Dvornik, and took part in the opening of a photographic exhibition entitled Most Vital Events in the Diplomatic Relations of the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China.

The diplomat noted that the

Gomel Region is dynamically developing, having launched several major investment projects involving Chinese capital: electrification of the railway which connects the regional centre with the capital; the modernisation of the M5 motorway; and the construction of a factory to manufacture cellulose and cardboard, in Svetlogorsk. The Ambassador and the Governor of the Gomel Region discussed these and other topics.

The photographic exhibition, hosted by Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace, is showcasing over 300 photos of key moments in Belarus-China relations, showing the gradual developments of the last two

decades. Moreover, shots capture events in politics, culture, sport and other areas of bilateral interaction.

This is the eighth joint exhibition project by the Chinese Embassy to Belarus and Gomel's Palace and Park Estate. The first occurred in 1997, with an exhibition of Chinese art. This was followed by exhibitions of Chinese traditional painting, national costume and contemporary design, which all enjoyed interest among Gomel residents. The events have provided the opportunity to gain closer acquaintance with the history, culture and achievements of the great Eastern Empire.

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