

Complete mutual understanding and important interaction

Development of Eurasian integration is a priority for Russia and Belarus

By Vladimir Khromov

The joint meeting of the Foreign Ministry collegiums of Belarus and Russia was held. However, previous to it, Minsk hosted a meeting between the Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Lavrov, and the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. They chatted for some time about the relationship between our two countries and co-operation within the Union State and other integration associations. Views were also exchanged on international issues, creating an introduction to the substantive discussion which took place a little later, between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and that of Russia.

Mr. Lukashenko often refers to liaisons between the Foreign Ministry of Belarus and that of Russia as an example to other ministries. He noted that such trusting relations are perhaps only seen elsewhere in the military, with others having some way to go to achieve similar success.

According to Mr. Lavrov, the joint meeting is a vital element in our foreign policy co-operation and serves as a useful platform for co-ordinating approaches to key issues on the international agenda. "Under conditions of ongoing profound change in the international landscape,

accompanied by turbulence in the spheres of economics and politics, this interaction is especially topical," stresses the Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry. "In this regard, Russia and Belarus (as participants of the Union State) are



Alexander Lukashenko and Sergey Lavrov share opinions on topical international issues

focusing on the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, promoting the universal principles of equal and indivisible security, while supporting a just and democratic polycentric system of world order, corresponding with the realities of the 21st century."

Following the results of the joint meeting, the Foreign Minister of Belarus, Vladimir

Makei, and the Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Lavrov, stressed that complete mutual understanding exists on key international issues. "We've reached absolute understanding on all prospects for

co-operation in the international arena. Our Ministries of Foreign Affairs have allied relations across many joint activities," said Mr. Makei. "We adhere to a completely unified approach within the international arena, without any disagreements — small or fundamental."

Mr. Lavrov is satisfied with the results of the last

joint meeting of the collegium of Foreign Ministries. "This facility has recommended itself as an effective platform for co-ordinating various foreign policy issues, supported from the top by our two presidents — as re-

affirmed during my meeting with Alexander Lukashenko," he said.

According to Mr. Lavrov, specific areas of co-operation between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Russia have been discussed. In particular, co-operation within the United Nations came under scrutiny, particularly in regard to human rights is-



Joint meeting of Foreign Ministry collegiums of Belarus and Russia

sues. "In this area, bias and double standards remain, so we'll continue to harmonise our approach to solving problems which arise, preventing them from politicisation and blocking any attempts to impose one-sided views on

the implementation of universally accepted standards regarding the protection and promotion of human rights. Double standards have no place here," noted the Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry. "We have agreed on concrete steps, including the need to jointly implement a global plan of action to combat human trafficking. The

plan was initiated by Belarus and adopted with the active support of Russia."

OSCE reform was also discussed, as Mr. Lavrov explains, "The proposals of Russia, Belarus and other CSTO members were laid on the table for negotiation long ago. We've agreed that we'll draw attention to these initiatives at the next meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OSCE, in Dublin."

Issues of information security were debated, with Belarus and Russia agreeing to take co-ordinated steps to promote a fair approach. A joint approach to historical revisionism was also agreed. "We believe that attempts to rewrite history for short-term political purposes are disrespectful to the memory of the millions who gave their lives to liberate Europe from Fascism. Such moves go against the decisions of the Nuremberg Trial and the fundamental principles of international relations, which are enshrined in the Charter of United Nations," stresses the Russian Minister.

A number of other issues were discussed, with the Russian Federation supporting the active involvement of the Republic of Belarus in the work of the Council of Europe and of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and within other regional multi-feature structures.

Time for young has now arrived

Alexander Lukashenko proposes gradual passing of power to younger politicians

"The time has come for a new generation of politicians in all spheres," noted the Head of State, speaking at a session of the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee of Belarus. "Our task is to see young politicians — aged 40-50 — take leading positions, without any rumpus. Current heads won't occupy their positions forever," the President added.

"I'm no supporter of appointing 25 year old ministers. Not only because these are inexperienced but because it's vital that they are respected by those they must supervise," explains Mr. Lukashenko. "I've experienced this, having been President since the age of 38. I understand that there's a time for everything, with age and experience playing a valuable role."

Only constructive dialogue yields fruit



Belarus expecting new programme with International Monetary Fund

Belarus' Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikovich, recently met the Head of the IMF Mission, David Hofman, noting the Republic's hope for further collaboration. Mr. Myasnikovich is pleased with what has been achieved to stabilise the

economy and the currency and consumer markets. He explains. "We've achieved a deficit-free budget and have secured growth in our gold-and-currency reserves while completely fulfilling our foreign debt obligations and planned budget appropriations. If we look at our foreign trade balance, we have a clear surplus — even when calculating by different approaches." Of course, inflation rates could be lower but they are within the forecast range. The next major task is to expand exports, to support macroeconomic stabilisation.

Mr. Hofman believes that Belarus should continue its policy of flexible exchange rate formation and the keeping of credit borrowing within strict limits for state programmes (to avoid excess risk). He warns that raising salaries beyond growth in labour efficiency will drive inflation upwards, while affecting the exchange rate.

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