

Partnership knows no borders

After his South-East Asia trip, President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has visited the United Arab Emirates, meeting the UAE leadership and having a range of meetings with representatives of business circles

By Vasily Kharitinov

The President of Belarus has met the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and UAE Interior Minister, Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

While relations with South-East Asian states are relatively new, those with the United Arab Emirates are long established, our diplomatic mission having opened there in 1992. Our bilateral relations have been characterised by a high degree of trust and active political contacts.

Mr. Lukashenko visited the UAE in 2000 and, most recently, in 2007 while high-level delegations have been exchanged many times. In March 2009, a member of the Executive Council of the Abu Dhabi Government, Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan (the elder son of the UAE President) visited Belarus.

Over quite a short period of time, relations between our two

states have acquired an open character of sincere friendship: a solid foundation for the development of Belarusian-Emirate liaisons. Accordingly, we have every hope that political dialogue will continue dynamically in the years to come.

As far as trade-economic collaboration is concerned, this is gradually gaining momentum, although is yet to match that seen with other partner states. Last year, Belarusian exports to the UAE totalled \$20.8m while imports stood at \$17.1m — relatively small figures. However, this has grown from nothing at all, with the amount rising year on year. Enterprises with Belarusian capital are operating in the United Arab Emirates and 14 companies with UAE capital are registered in Belarus; businessmen from the UAE are investing in our economy.

Clearly, the scene is now set for further visits by the President to this friendly and promising partner state. On meeting the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mr. Lukashenko noted that Belarus hopes to reinforce

co-operation with the UAE in various spheres. He emphasised, "The Republic of Belarus' aspiration to develop relations with the UAE is a conscious choice, borne from a desire to build fully-fledged interaction with a friendly state. We feel a similar approach from the UAE, and Belarus hopes that active political dialogue will continue to develop dynamically. We aim to gradually take our relations to a new level of co-operation, covering all key areas of politics and economics."

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has also confirmed interest in strengthening Belarusian-Emirate ties and in developing mutually beneficial collaboration.

Our two nations have discussed issues of co-operation in various branches: particularly, agriculture, industry and military-technical. Moreover, it has been agreed to study proposals at the next session of the Inter-governmental Belarusian-Emirate Commission on Trade-Economic Co-operation, which is scheduled for April.

The Crown Prince has en-



Alexander Lukashenko during meeting with Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

trusted the UAE Government with promptly submitting definite proposals for main areas of collaboration with Belarus, which embrace our bilateral interests.

As a sign of special respect, the Crown Prince invited members of ruling families from various emirates to attend his meeting with Alexander Lukashenko, as well as members of the Government, Parliament and diplomatic corps accredited in the UAE. Other influential figures from the UAE also took part.

Mr. Lukashenko's meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and UAE Interior Minister, Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was also productive. Mr. Lukashenko stressed the dynamic development of the UAE in various spheres, includ-

ing construction, tourism and oil extraction. He believes that the UAE's experience could be useful to Belarus, noting, "We have mutually complementary rather than competing economies. Our companies could become active in the Emirates, while your enterprises could find their niche in Belarus. If this is beneficial and interesting, we shouldn't waste time; we should co-operate. We're pleased that the Emirates have never placed any preliminary conditions on us for collaboration. Moreover, we don't plan to govern our interaction with political conditions."

According to Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE is interested in developing liaisons with Belarus across all areas, "We're aware that industry, agriculture and other areas are well devel-

oped in Belarus and that your country is a leader among Eastern European states in terms of economic growth. We agree with you that it's necessary to guide the economic basis of our co-operation. We know that, in the 2000s, Belarus was developing very rapidly, with GDP growing by about 8-9 percent annually. In the USA, growth stood at just 1-2 percent, so we note that yours was very high. I completely agree with your words and proposals and I have instructions from the President and the Crown Prince to develop collaboration with your country. We'll determine definite projects for implementation."

The President's visit has certainly stimulated collaboration with the UAE across all areas.

Essence of real actions

By Nina Romanova

Official visit of President Lukashenko to United Arab Emirates ends tour of 'far arc' of South-East Asia and Middle East

If visits to Indonesia and Singapore, with which relations are in their infancy, can be characterised as mastering new markets in South-East Asia, then the visit to the UAE, the third in succession, demonstrates the stability of existing relations in the region.

Speaking to journalists, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Valentin Rybakov, gave his views on Belarusian-Emirati interaction and co-operation. Like many others, I've been wondering what the Emirates can offer Belarus — being the most brilliant part of the Middle East. We all know about their oil reserves, for which they are famous, but Abu-Dhabi is also known as a dynamic, super modern international economic centre. It boasts the world's highest skyscraper, the Burj Khalifa, while its intellectual prowess is evident in its Internet-city.

The whole world is keen to liaise with today's UAE. For the last two decades, good relations have existed



Dubai is the capital of the UAE

between our two countries, characterised by a high degree of trust and political dialogue. "Such results have been achieved thanks to good personal contacts between the leadership of Belarus and the UAE, which are often the deciding factor, taking into account the unique nature of Arab Peninsula nations," emphasised the Deputy Minister.

As regards the development of co-operation with the UAE, it's impossible to ignore the fact that they possess significant free finance resources. Mr. Rybakov affirmed that partners from the Emirates are interesting as investors and that Belarus has various at-

tractive projects to offer in the spheres of infrastructure, agriculture, industry and real estate.

Analysing prospects for developing co-operation with the UAE, and taking into account the recent visit of the President of Belarus to this country, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stresses, "The Head of State recently met the Crown Prince of Abu-Dhabi, the Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He also met the UAE Interior Minister, Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Both are keen to activate co-operation in key economic spheres, as well as in the military technical sphere. The Crown Prince of Abu-Dhabi has tasked the UAE government with preparing suggestions for key areas of co-operation with Belarus, leading to the launch of joint, mutually beneficial projects in the near future.

At the next meeting of the inter-governmental joint committee, concrete projects are to be discussed, including suggestions from the Belarusian President's meetings with the UAE leadership.

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