

Multi-vector policy perfectly suits integration space

Meeting the Speaker of the State Duma of Russia, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union State, Sergei Naryshkin, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko notes that the Union State is promoting integration not only within the Single Economic Space, but also across the CIS

By Vasily Kharitonov

The Belarusian President is convinced that the Union State project will always be relevant. He emphasises, "The establishment of the Union State has contributed to faster promotion of other integration projects, especially within the framework of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space. Unfortunately, integration within these projects is not as tight as that between Belarus and Russia within the Union State. However, it's just a matter of time. The experience we've gained will be useful not only for the SES and the future Eurasian Union but for the CIS."

Mr. Lukashenko sees sincere interest and progress in co-operation and integration at all CIS levels, saying, "Everybody can finally see that we're not so welcome abroad and that we should look for support here." He points out that 'new challenges constantly emerge, including some we probably don't deserve: from economy to defence.'

He stressed to his colleague, "Recently, at all levels, including parliamentary, we've been taking measures to meet these challenges. We proceed with the best intentions and don't harm anyone, simply trying to spur on our economic growth." He emphasised that Belarus, to say nothing of Russia, has no need of other countries' territories but won't be yielding its own territory either. "Everyone should clearly understand that this is the basis of our policy."

The President emphasised that some states pursue their national policies while taking into consideration the policies of



Alexander Lukashenko meets Sergei Naryshkin in Minsk, tackling issues of multi-faceted integration

neighbouring countries. "This pertains mostly to Central Asia and Ukraine," Mr. Lukashenko said. "Nevertheless, I'm convinced that the future belongs to our post-Soviet space; integration here will be most powerful and comprehensive. We need to be more determined and decisive in this direction, including in the parliamentary dimension."

Mr. Lukashenko has announced that more active development of relations with the EU is vital, and that our relationship with Russia will remain unaffected. He asserts that, within its framework of integration, Belarus will pursue a very active policy. "We've never abandoned this idea and never will," stressed Mr. Lukashenko.

He believes that statements by individual politicians, including Russian, claiming that Belarus swings from one side to another, are unjustified. "Belarus has never done this," Mr. Lukashenko emphasises, noting that Belarus stands between two giants: Russia and the European Union. It builds its relations accordingly.

The Head of State continued, "We don't doubt, and nor does Russia, that Belarus is a successful state. Our economy is important, so we need to build normal relations with the European Union, without damaging our ally and brotherly nation of Russia under any circumstances. It's simply unavoidable." The Head of State stressed, "Whoever is in power

in Belarus, they'll have to follow this policy."

The President is convinced that Belarus should move towards the European Union more actively, building relations. He adds, "We understand perfectly that our bad relations with Europe cannot benefit our relations with Russia."

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that vigorous work is in progress, with many agreements with Russia. "It's sacred for us to actively co-operate, especially within the framework of the Union State. We'll never abandon this policy," the President assured. "If we're forced to choose in favour of Russia or Europe, or some other association, we'll never do so; our policy will follow this path."

Mr. Naryshkin noted, "The deputies of the Russian State Duma have praised bilateral inter-state and inter-parliamentary relationships with Belarus. We're determined to maintain integration with Belarus at the highest level."

From the Presidential Residence, Mr. Naryshkin arrived at the House of Government's Oval Hall, where parliamentarians from our two states discussed the fulfilment of the Union State budget in 2011 and the success of joint projects. The budget is allocating 4.8bn Russian Roubles, with almost all funds spent on Union State programmes. Mr. Naryshkin notes that parliamentarians' receipt of budgetary reports from ministries is very much delayed,

with income and expenditure only available from the year before last. A clear proposal has been voiced to prepare data for the previous year by November from now on.

During the 'Eurasian Economic Prospect' round table discussion in the Belarusian Parliament, Mr. Naryshkin noted that integration of our 'troika' must go beyond the economic sphere. He believes that interaction between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan must cover the humanitarian sphere and ecology, drawing on the experience of the Union State. Additionally, he would like to see citizens of Eurasian Economic Union member states enjoying equal rights of movement and employment, as well as access to education and other services.

Mr. Naryshkin believes we must monitor all actions aiming to promote free movement of capital and labour, keeping an eye on obstacles.

The First Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union State, the Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, Vladimir Andreichenko, congratulated Russia on its state holiday: the Day of Russia. He noted that the round table discussion had brought together representatives of the Kazakh Parliament, as well as the Ukrainian Government and the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan. Speaking of Ukrainian and Kyrgyz representation, Mr. Andreichenko emphasised that their participation 'indicates constant attention' regarding the development of the Eurasian Economic Union.

New joint economic projects precede diplomatic visit

By Veniamin Mikheev

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev

Mr. Makei delivered the Belarusian President's message of congratulation to the Azerbaijani Head of State, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Belarus-Azerbaijan diplomatic relations. The sides discussed topical bilateral issues, highlighting the significant achievements of our partnership and potential for further development. Special attention was paid to the inventory of

joint economic projects currently being implemented in Belarus and Azerbaijan, agreeing that, by the time of the Belarusian President's autumn visit to Azerbaijan, our states will have prepared joint industrial projects. President Aliyev appreciates the friendly character of our relations.

Mr. Makei also met the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, who detailed the positive co-operation between our two states' foreign ministries over the past 20 years. They agreed to continue mutual support for the initiatives and candidacies of both countries within the framework of

international organisations. Co-ordinated actions on international platforms were also discussed, in addition to the establishment of tighter co-operation across various areas.

Mr. Makei then visited the Baku Slavic University to tour the Belarusian Language and Cultural Studies Centre, chatting to members of the Azerbaijan-Belarus Friendship and Co-operation Society: an informal structure comprising prominent figures of science, culture and business. During his visit, the Centre presented him with a miniature edition of Yanka Kupala's *Zhaleika*.

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