

# Country's deed is highly appreciated

Belarus' joining Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) two decades ago — on 22nd July, 1993, was highly appreciated by global community

By Maxim Orlov

Our country was the first to voluntarily, and without any preliminary conditions or reservations, renounce nuclear weapons after the collapse of the USSR. All nuclear weapons had been removed by November 1996.

Marking the 20th anniversary of accession to the NPT, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced: 'The contribution

of Belarus to the process of nuclear disarmament is recognised by the international community and is proven by various international documents. The decision of Belarus set the tone for subsequent steps in the field of nuclear disarmament across the post-Soviet space, radically changing the dynamics of disarmament and opening paths to new initiatives in this sphere.'

According to the former Head of the International Atomic En-

ergy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed Mustafa ElBaradei, almost fifty countries have the ability to make nuclear weaponry, having access to the necessary technologies and materials. However, the greatest fear is that terrorist structures may gain access. Naturally, Belarus is keen to do all it can to prevent such a situation.

The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs comments: 'Belarus considers that signatory states

are obliged to pursue negotiations towards effective measures of nuclear disarmament, as enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, supporting a reasonable and gradual approach to nuclear disarmament, with a multilateral and irreversible character. Viewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a basic element of international security and strategic stability, Belarus intends to



help strengthen a global regime of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.'

# Children from common land keeping in touch

Belarusian countrymen abroad study their native language, sing folk songs, draw pictures of Belarus and promote their homeland in all possible ways

By Lyudmila Avdeeva

The recent 6th meeting of Belarusians from around the world — *Belarusian Nation under Globalisation Conditions: Challenges and Possibilities* — gathered our countrymen from 21 states. Once every four years, Belarusians come to the Republic from all over the world to share their views and accumulated experience, while proposing new ideas and thanking the land where their forefathers were born.

Around 3.5m Belarusians live abroad and it's an integral part of state policy to keep in touch with them, rendering help to public associations of Belarusian countrymen residing abroad. "The Belarusian diaspora is essential to the Belarusian nation," notes Belarus' Culture Minister, Boris Svetlov. "These people help present our national culture abroad, strengthening Belarusian state authority and informing the world community of our cultural processes, without bias. Moreover, they help attract investment and promote Belarusian interests on foreign markets."

The gathering of Belarusian countrymen stems from more than mere nostalgia, emphasises Oleg Rudakov, the head and founder of the Irkutsk Society of Belarusian Culture (named after Yan Chersky). "Initial nostalgic romanticism has transformed into practical pragmatic work. Every year, I notice an increasing number of Belarusian diaspora organisations. Their level of operation is enhancing and they work thoroughly and professionally."

"We're involved in preserving our cultural heritage: language, culture and history," explains the Head of the Baltic States' Union of Artists, Vyachka Tselesh (who has lived in Latvia for over 50 years). "A Belarusian language school operates in Riga, in addition to a Belarusian society, where we sing our folk songs, publish books on Belarusian history and create art works."



Skilful weaver Tatiana Rasmussen, from Denmark

Pictures by Belarusian painters living in Latvia were taken to the meeting, to represent them to Belarusians and leave part of our common heritage in their homeland. "Our pictures are also kept by Latvian museums, as works painted by Latvian citizens. However, our home is more here, rather than there. We — Belarusians — are scattered all over the world

and, each time we come here (it's our sixth meeting so far), we view each other as closest souls. This is a very important meeting," Mr. Tselesh added.

Of course, delegates share not only their joys and pleasure at seeing each other in their native land but discuss their achievements abroad and evident problems. "One of the most acute topics for

the Belarusian diaspora in Moldova — and for me, in particular, as I have several children — is the lack of youngsters in our diaspora organisations," admits the Head of the Belarusian Sunday school in Chisinau, the Deputy Head of the Belarusian diaspora in Moldova, Anna Mazur. "Eight Belarusian ethno-cultural organisations operate in Moldova but those aged under 35 comprise just five percent of members. I think the problem relates not solely to our diaspora but to mixed marriages and young people's desire to integrate into the local population, to enjoy higher social status." Mrs. Mazur hopes to see public organisations and the Belarusian authorities pay more attention to the problem, so that young people don't lose their love for their homeland and their sense of national identity.

"We'd love to enjoy stronger co-operation with the Belarusian state," adds Mr. Rudakov. "I remember the last festival of Belarusians from around the world — organised three years ago as part of the *Slavianski Bazaar* in Vitebsk. Teams from 12 countries took part and the event was perfectly arranged. We'd like to see more events of this kind. Do you know why we're studying Belarusian language, dance, songs and traditions? We all hope to visit our historical homeland at least once, showing via our artistry that we cherish and love our Motherland."

The recent meeting tackled another much anticipated topic: the adoption of a law on countrymen. "Almost all European states have a law of this kind so it's high time that we adopt something; the issue has been long debated," comments Doctor of Philology, Professor Adam Maldis, who works at Belarus' Culture Institute. According to Minister Svetlov, a draft law 'On Belarusians Abroad' is now ready for study by the National Assembly. However, he adds that work will be ongoing, as the recent meeting proves.

# Minister with twenty years of experience

**First film about history of Belarusian diplomacy premieres**

*Belarusian Diplomacy: The First Minister* premiered in Minsk on 19th July, being the first documentary film to describe Belarusian international relations. Dedicated to the first BSSR Foreign Minister, Kuzma Kiselev, the film has been directed by Sergey Ageenko.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei attended the screening, alongside representatives of government agencies and departments, and the Director General of Belarusfilm National Film Studio, Oleg Silvanovich. Kuzma Kiselev's children were guests of honour. Before the screening, Mr. Makei commented that the Foreign Ministry is eager to preserve and promote its traditions, drawing upon the experience of predecessors. He noted, "Kuzma Kiselev worked as Foreign Minister for 20 years, helping shape post-war history." Mr. Silvanovich explained that the film is the first in a series about public figures of Belarus, with Belarusfilm next shooting a documentary about Culture Minister Yuri Mikhnevich. "We want to tell the public about those who have shaped Belarusian culture and foreign policy; their lives were anything but simple and easy," he emphasises. *Belarusian Diplomacy: The First Minister* will be shown on Belarusian TV this autumn.

# Brest checkpoint a focus for cycling enthusiasts

**Brest's cycling clubs applying to State Border Committee of the Republic of Belarus**

Cyclists are keen to gain permission to cross Belarusian borders while enjoying cycling tours abroad and would like to be able to cross at any of the checkpoints used by other vehicles. They advocate that it may increase the number of cycle tourists entering the country. Proposals were received by the State Border Committee a year ago, with the decision made that separate entry points for cyclists are necessary; Poland agrees that separate provision is necessary for those on foot or bike.