

Security measures should not inconvenience Ice Hockey World Championship visitors

Less than a month remains until the Ice Hockey World Championship begins in Minsk. Are we ready? Will our many foreign visitors feel comfortable? What remains to be done? These questions were discussed at the last session of the Security Council, attended by the Belarusian President.



The mascot symbol of the Ice Hockey World Championship, against the background of Nezavisimosti Avenue

By Vasily Kharitonov

Mr. Lukashenko has demanded that safety be ensured at the May tournament, without visitors suffering undue inconvenience. He urges, "Our main task as organisers is to ensure the safety of participants and visitors. We shouldn't allow anything untoward to occur but must also try to make our security measures unobtrusive, so that participants and visitors, as well as journalists, don't feel them as a burden."

Mr. Lukashenko especially notes the importance of this sports forum for Belarus, saying, "It's a grand event: in scale and importance. This is a real sports holiday for Belarusians, and for millions of

hockey fans worldwide. We should present ourselves in the best light to the international community." He believes that the level of organisation at the Minsk tournament will be inevitably compared to previ-

ous world championships but feels confident that a 'high degree of organisation' will be evident, 'proving to everyone that we are a civilised state at the centre of Europe'. He notes, "We want everyone who

arrives to remember Belarus with fond memories of our friendliness and hospitality."

Mr. Lukashenko wishes guests to feel comfortable, enjoying service at the highest level. He told the Security Council, "The event should be not only symbolic and memorable for our people, but should inspire the future development of popular sports, especially after the successes of our Belarusian athletes in Sochi." He added that Belarus is ready for the World Championship but that time also remains to tackle small details.

Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov delivered a report on the current state of tournament readiness, noting that most tickets are already sold out — particularly for

Word for word

The President:

Tournaments of such scale always have a political undercurrent. Sports long ago became subject to certain policies: often dirty and dishonourable. We shouldn't allow this to happen, endeavouring to keep this as a joyful holiday. It's impossible to forget that speculation surrounds this championship; those who oppose us, including from abroad, (the 'fifth column') aim to boycott matches and blackmail us. Various western politicians, for tactical reasons, have tried to 'aggravate the situation' using the most refined methods of information pressure. Instead of objective analysis of the situation in Belarus, they prefer to take their information from extreme sources, with political bias. They put forward far-fetched claims and political requirements. Fortunately, at last, Western political circles are starting to realise that this mode of pressure on Belarus is a waste of time. Appeals are being made to develop new approaches and views.

- In all, 43 hotels are ready to receive guests, able to sleep 9,725. Of these, 12 are newly built. The Student Village's five hostels can sleep 5,030 and another 2,100 beds are available at spas and hotels across the Minsk Region.
- Cafes and restaurants in Minsk can offer seating for around 75,000 people, and another 20,000 people may be served via public catering stalls.
- Minsk National Airport can now serve 5,900,000 travellers (up from 2,200,000).
- There are 752 volunteers from among students: all with a good knowledge of foreign languages. Another 190 students, from the Medical University, are helping at first aid stations across the city.

key games, such as between Belarus and the USA. All the hotels are ready and cultural establishments are to extend their hours for the duration of the event, while the city transport fleet has new vehicles ready for operation. On May 8th, there will be a solemn ceremony of participating states' flags being raised.

The President emphasises that the renovations conducted for the championship will continue to be long enjoyed by residents of Minsk, and future visitors. He believes that enhanced facilities are desirable for everyone and will remain a focus of state funding.

In the second part of the meeting, the Security Council ascertained that the political situation in Ukraine shouldn't bear any direct threat to Belarus, since citizens are keen to see Ukraine enjoy civil peace and stability. Belarus has no pretensions towards taking a leading role in settling the Ukrainian conflict, but will aim to preserve and develop its relations with its brotherly country-neighbour.

The country accepts presidency

By Vladimir Khromov

Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CIS invites Belarus to hold presidency through forthcoming year

At the session, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Vladimir Makei, great attention was given to the question of the CIS presidency, in light of Ukraine having asked to relinquish the honour in March. Belarus expressed full readiness to take over, having held the presidency last year.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, hopes that, under the presidency of Belarus, this year will be

fruitful for the Commonwealth. The Executive Secretary of the CIS, Sergey Lebedev, thanked the administration of Belarus for consenting to undertake the burden and noted that, this year, Belarus will be chairing all the supreme bodies of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Lebedev noted that other CIS states are eager to continue the events planned under the Ukrainian presidency for 2014, such as the Creative and Scientific Forum being hosted by Kazakhstan. He added, "Belarus' presidency of the CIS will see it carry out not only organisational functions, but the creation of concrete content."

Mr. Makei underlined that, taking into account the current situation, it's

impossible to speculate on Belarus offering a fully-fledged concept for the CIS presidency, since it is accepting 'on the hoof'. However, he emphasises that, in 2013, when Belarus last hosted the CIS presidency, it realised about 70 programme points, focusing on integration. It aims to continue following the same agenda and he sees the promotion of good neighbourliness across the CIS as a priority. He also wishes to focus on economic questions, including the CIS free trade zone, preparing documents relating to free trade in services, and for state purchases. Celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of Great Patriotic War Victory for Commonwealth countries will also receive attention.

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