

Strict deadlines must be kept without fail

President of Belarus urges timely launch of Eurasian Economic Union Treaty

The presidents of Customs Union member states have agreed that the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty should be ready by May 1st, 2014, for launch on January 1st, 2015. "Set deadlines have been made and I wouldn't like to break them," the Belarusian President emphasised on meeting members of the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Chairman of the Eurasian Economic

Commission Collegium.

He added, "It's vital, since work on establishing the Union State of Belarus and Russia and, even more so, the Commonwealth of Independent States, saw our people with inflated expectations (or perhaps normal ones) which we failed to meet. People are now anticipating the failure of the project and, if we shift the timeframe or fail to meet deadlines, they won't be hap-

py about it." He underlined that participants of the meeting should report on progress in forming the Eurasian Economic Union: information sought not only by himself but by the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan. He asserted, "You're going to visit all the presidents and tell them about your work: starting with Belarus." He is eager to hear whether there have been complaints about Belarus regarding

the process and gave his guarantee that all issues would be settled, stressing that matters concerning the formation of economic unity would be discussed. "Naturally, economics will lead to other issues. Military and political issues within our Customs Union and the Single Economic Space rely on the Collective Security Treaty Organisation so we need to combine these aspects."



Peace and stability are the major achievements of sovereign Belarus

By Vladimir Khromov

Belarus' reliable system of national security allows us to react promptly to challenges and threats, notes Alexander Lukashenko, speaking on February 23rd to senior personnel of the Armed Forces and law enforcement bodies, on the occasion of the Day of Fatherland Defenders and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus

The President underlined that this holiday is one of the most respected countrywide, honouring not only our heroic history but offering our sincere gratitude to those who devoted their lives to protecting the Motherland. Self-sacrificing military work has always been worthy of deep respect, as commemorated on the Day of Fatherland Defenders.

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that, on the 70th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from the Nazis, it is appropriate to underline that hundreds of thousands of those born on Belarusian lands rose to protect them in that sacred struggle against the aggressor. Army soldiers took the main burden of fighting, showing extreme valour, firmness of moral spirit and self-sacrificing love for their country. Their courage broke the back of the Fascists, bringing victory not only to Belarus, but to all Europe.

The President noted that our courageous people, having steadily endured the burdens of war and occupation, remained unsubdued, refusing to be enslaved. "The idea of a generation of winners is our guiding motto in creating, protecting and developing our sovereign state," said the Belarusian leader.

"I've said it more than once and now want to emphasise again that we are building a peaceful, independent state so that our people will never be under anyone's lash. It is my main objective as head of state. An important factor in achieving this is our well trained Armed Forces and competent law enforcement bodies, who we call upon to provide defence for our country and socio-political stability in society."

The President believes that Belarus' geographical position and open economy cannot fail to be influenced by major global geopolitical processes. "Our foreign and domestic policy must be coherent, allowing us to protect Belarus from negative phenomena, and to prevent a split in society, or the coming of anarchy. We'll anticipate any enemy's feeble efforts," Mr. Lukashenko stressed.

On the Day of Fatherland Defenders and the Armed Forces, the President of Belarus also placed a garland at the Victory Monument in Minsk.

'Two border services' brought in operation

All Belarus' checkpoints began the year with changes. Some more mechanisms working in normal mode appeared, aimed at accelerating and simplifying the movement between countries.

By Violetta Dralyuk

Belarus started the introduction of this concept three years ago. The basic essence of changes, against a background of growing automobile, passenger and commodity streams, was to make control procedures on checkpoints quicker, and to minimise the quantity of control services working on the borders. In other words, it is important to leave only the main, border and customs services, in control of all necessary operations. The concept has been realised stage by stage. Since the beginning of the year, for example, transport and sanitary-quarantine control is now under supervision of customs officers and border guards.

In order to see how this works in practice, I went to the Novaya Guta checkpoint at the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. Customs employees are at the transport control, where they had operated transport inspections till the New Year. They willingly told about working days using the new format.

"In transport control lorries pass checks of the necessary documents. When entering Belarus they also have weight control. Here, under this roof, do you see metal plates on the road? These are scales. The information on the cargo is read out by sensors... Actually, this is nothing new for the carriers. However, this direction is new for us," he added.

Behind this seeming simplicity of transport control are about ten nar-



Control procedures at Novaya Guta checkpoint are minimised

row functions: check of permissions, route sheets, insurance policies, registration of foreign carriers, weighing of transport for identification of load on axis, measurement of dimensions... Therefore, theory and practice of the new direction on customs had been mastered long before January 1st, 2014. The Head of the Kravtsovsky customs post, Mr. Grinko explained in details, "A lot of work was done. First of all, we centrally implemented the new software, which enables us to combine and optimise information streams. Our personnel also completed training courses. For example, each worker at Kravtsovsky customs post can be involved in the work on the area of transport control. Until January 15th, transport inspection was giving us round-the-clock advisory support."

Sanitary services now also work as advisers at check points. Their

mission of sanitary-quarantine control was also transferred to other service. Customs officers check documents on production according to specified sanitary-epidemiological requirements. While border guards carry out visual survey of people and ask them about their state of health. Henceforth they look at faces not only to verify a photo of the passport with reality, but also to consider signs of fever, temperature and other symptoms of illness. They are taught how to distinguish dangerous infectious diseases. From a distance I watch the work of border guards checking documents. The employee, besides other things, asks a Russian driver some questions: "How do you feel? Do you have any health issues?"

It is obvious that everything is all right with him. He smiles broadly, when he is allowed to continue his way. To date, they have never had

any serious questions on health, but if they do appear, the border guards know how to act.

The principle of 'two border services' is clear. However there is a question who and how will benefit from these changes. Efficiency calculations already exist. Instead of the previous 40 minutes of control operations, cargo carriers will now have no more than 30 minutes for the same volume of procedures. As a whole, the duration of transport at customs control is reduced by 20-30 percent. Every driver who spends days at the wheel with every minute of inactivity costing both nerves and money, can now estimate these figures.

However, according to experts, these are not all the changes. The concept 'two border services' will acquire its final form by 2015. At this point it will be possible to fully evaluate its positive effect.