

Fruitful dialogue in Minsk with quick continuation in Dushanbe

During negotiations with the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, stated that, during the years of independence, Tajikistan had become a reliable partner for Belarus in the strategically important region of the Central Asia

By Vladimir Mikhailovsky

Opening the meeting, Mr. Lukashenko underlined that Emomali Rahmon is always a welcome guest in Belarus, and his personal friend. "I'm very glad that on getting acquainted many years ago we haven't ever betrayed our traditions, and are always pleased to meet to openly discuss the problems that are of concern to our states and our neighbours," said the Head of Belarus.

Mr. Lukashenko believes that the visit of the Tajikistan President will help strengthen bilateral contact, and will help reach a decent level of co-operation in the trade and economic fields. The Belarusian President paid attention to the fact that the two countries have no problems regarding their political, diplomatic and military-political co-operation. Moreover, both states are members of the CSTO and the CIS, and have no disagreements on the international agenda.

In his turn, Emomali Rahmon noted that his current visit to Minsk was a great opportunity to discuss Belarusian-Tajikistani co-operation prospects in multiple fields. In his words, top of the agenda was the situation in the region, in particular, the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan this year. "There are many issues we should discuss in order to give a powerful impetus to bilateral relations," he said. The Tajikistan President expressed confidence that the two countries had considerable reserves and opportunities to deepen their trade and economic collaboration.

He thanked Belarus for its great help in training Tajikistani specialists in various spheres, including the military and border guards. "Belarus has always lent a hand to Tajikistan in a difficult situation, both within the framework of the CSTO and at the bilateral level. In particular, Belarus provided assistance to Tajikistan in strengthening the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border," Mr. Rahmon said.

During the extended negotiations, the two sides discussed a range



Alexander Lukashenko and Emomali Rahmon pleased with their constructive meeting in Minsk

of Belarusian-Tajikistani relations while sharing their opinions on acute international and regional problems, which are of bilateral interest.

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that, these days, the economy is the locomotive of integration. In this respect, the Heads of State voiced their concern over the decline in bilateral trade over the past two years. The parties agreed that the inter-governmental commission should do its utmost to restore and even surpass the former level of trade. According to the Belarusian leader, the countries should ensure efficient implementation of the interstate economic co-operation programme set to run until 2020.

Mr. Lukashenko noted that Belarus can supply products to Tajikistan using leasing schemes and subsidised loans, including loans provided by Tajikistani banks. "I suppose that such types of collaboration will be also of interest to your farmers," noted the Head of the Belarusian state.

Mr. Lukashenko deemed it necessary to step up interaction in the humanitarian field, alongside education and culture. He suggested resum-

ing the tradition of arranging Days of Culture and said that Belarus was ready to hold Days of Culture in Tajikistan in 2015.

"We constructively interact within the framework of international organisations, being allies within the CIS and the CSTO, and we are keen to expand mutual ties with Tajikistan in various fields, including politics,

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trade, economy, defence industry, and humanitarian field," noted the President of Belarus, adding that the current visit of his colleague would become a landmark stage in the expansion of collaboration between the two states.

In his turn, Mr. Rahmon underlined that Tajikistan attached priority importance to the strengthening

of ties with Belarus. The President of Tajikistan also noted that he viewed his current visit to Belarus as a continuation of constant political contact between the two states at the top and high levels. According to him, negotiations in Minsk are significant in determining guidelines for further development of the two countries' relations in line with the requirements of the time. Mr. Rahmon also paid attention to multifaceted ties between Belarus and Tajikistan, covering all key spheres of collaboration: political, economic, cultural-humanitarian, military-technical and other. "The relations with our dear Belarus occupy a special place in Tajikistan's foreign political course. We give priority to issues of the further strengthening of ties with Belarus while ensuring their long-term and stable character," noted the President of Tajikistan. He also congratulated the Belarusian side on the 'wonderful organisation of the grandiose sporting holiday which is the Ice Hockey World Championship'.

The negotiations resulted in Belarus and Tajikistan signing a package of documents, that expand co-oper-

ation in the manufacturing industry, social and humanitarian fields, as well as at the regional level. They signed documents that will determine the parameters of action in key spheres for the coming years.

The Heads of State adopted a joint statement where they expressed confidence that the implementation of the reached arrangements and bilateral documents signed during the visit will promote further development of traditionally friendly relations on the basis of an equal and mutually beneficial partnership. The parties noted that the documents will significantly improve the legal framework of bilateral relationships, which is a reliable foundation for all-round co-operation and the efficient use of the potential of the two countries for the benefit of the two nations.

Summing up the results of the negotiations, Mr. Lukashenko focused on their substantive and constructive character. The Presidents have discussed a wide range of issues related to the bilateral co-operation and contacts on the international arena within the framework of the UN, the CIS, the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The partners concluded that they had similar views on all the issues.

The Head of the Belarusian state said that he had instructed the government to provide support to Tajikistan, all things being equal. "If our partners get interested in our co-operation proposals, we will implement these projects within two years at the most; even the most complicated ones. There are no irresolvable issues. We do not engineer, we do not try to make things complicated. If we have agreed on something, we will certainly realise it," assured Mr. Lukashenko. "You can be confident that we will do our part."

Mr. Rahmon invited the Head of the Belarusian state to make an official visit to Tajikistan. According to him, the continuation of the fruitful dialogue in Dushanbe will promote even greater activation of the bilateral interaction.

A farewell to arms, including chemical

At a meeting with Director General for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ahmet Üzümcü, Alexander Lukashenko confirms Belarus' adherence to the international Chemical Weapons Convention

By Veniamin Mishin

The President of Belarus particularly emphasised that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons received the Nobel Peace Prize. "I believe that the organisation deserved this prize, because you and your organisation were probably the first to take such a big step to destroy chemical weapons.

We have always collaborated and will keep co-operating with your organisation (our organisation, as we are its member state). We honour the Chemical Weapons Convention, and in this respect, you can count on our support and assistance," said the Belarusian leader.

Belarus is interested in the organisation of a regional centre of the OPCW on Be-

larussian territory. "We are in favour of promoting the interests of the organisation on the territory of Belarus and would like to have a regional branch of the organisation in Belarus. If a positive decision is made, we will do our best to make sure that specialists working on the elimination and prohibition of chemical weapons feel comfortable here," stated Mr. Lukashenko.

The President said that the OPCW never had claims to the operation of chemical and petrochemical companies of the country. "I assure you that the level of work of our enterprises will continue to be such, further on," said the Belarusian leader.

In his turn, Ahmet Üzümcü praised the high level of interaction between the OPCW and Belarus.

"Our organisation thanks Belarus for the assistance that your country provides us, including in destroying chemical weapons from Syria," noted the OPCW Director General.

"Our main goal is to destroy all chemical weapons on our planet. We are not far from achieving this goal. About 82 percent of all chemical weapons which



existed in the world have been already destroyed. All countries, members of the convention, have made a big contribution to the implementation of its provisions," added Mr. Üzümcü.