

Key points highlighted

Minsk has hosted sessions of the Council of CIS Heads of Government, the EurAsEC Interstate Council and the Supreme Body of the Customs Union. The most vital points have been highlighted during bilateral meetings between the President of Belarus and heads of delegations.

By Igor Slavinsky

Alexander Lukashenko has negotiated with Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, with Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and with Azerbaijan's First Deputy Prime Minister, Yaqub Eyyubov. The Russian Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, was also his guest.

Very good relations have been established between Armenia and Belarus, including at the highest level. Our states are allies within the CSTO and our two presidents regularly meet for bilateral talks, and at various summits. Mr. Lukashenko notes that 'politics and conversations don't mean anything without an economic foundation'. Over the last decade, turnover between our countries has risen almost 16-fold.

On the eve of the pre-election

campaign in Armenia, the Belarusian President said, "I'd hope you emerge from this time successful, with the positive dynamics and trends existing in the economy and society preserved."

The Armenian Prime Minister believes that our high level of political dialogue will bring corresponding economic relations, with definite steps elaborated by both governments for this purpose.

Kiev and Baku are Minsk's strategic partners. Moreover, we enjoy joint projects in trilateral format. Belarus' plans to ensure its energy security are directly connected with these two states. In fact, the Ukrainian vector is one of the most important of Belarusian foreign policy, with trade figures acting as bright examples. Our southern neighbour is ranked second for Belarus,

while we are among the top five for Ukraine. In the first three months of this year, mutual turnover totalled \$1.2bn (up almost 60 percent on last year). As is traditional, Belarusian exports are expanding quicker than imports, bringing in currency. Undoubtedly, Ukraine is a beneficial partner.

"I'd like to tell you that Belarus has always been and remains loyal to its principles. It has been a reliable ally of our brotherly Ukraine and remains so," asserted Alexander Lukashenko to the Ukrainian Prime Minister. "We're ready, without hesitation, to jointly promote Ukraine's interests alongside our own. I'd like you to pass these words to President Yanukovich."

In recent times, our countries have implemented several major joint projects, with the launch of

oil transit for Belarus via Odessa port among the greatest. Supplies of Venezuelan Santa-Barbara oil have been arriving for the past year, with 17 tankers already discharged. A contract has been signed for annual pumping of 4m tonnes of Azerbaijani oil via Ukraine, through the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline.

Energy issues were also high on the agenda during the meeting with the Baku guest. Addressing the Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, Yaqub Eyyubov, the Belarusian Head of State noted, "Unfortunately, our independence and our sovereignty are hampered by 'evil' energy sources and raw materials; such is our economy. You've given us a shoulder. Today we process Azerbaijani oil of the highest quality. You've defended us and saved our independence and sovereignty, just



as Venezuela has. We're sincerely grateful to you for this."

At present, our two countries are closely liaising in every possible area. Mr. Lukashenko has assured his guest, "Minsk will remain faithful to all mutual agreements."

According to the Presidential Press Service, issues of bilateral trade-economic collaboration between Russia and Belarus were tackled at a meeting with Vladimir Putin.



Heads of government's sessions in Minsk open serious prospects

Outlining new situation

Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan ready to launch Eurasian Economic Union from 2013, with Customs Union and Single Economic Space serving as basis for larger new integration structure

By Yulia Ignatieva

It's quite possible that, by 2013, the project will include more than its current three members; Kyrgyzstan has already applied to join, while Tajikistan is showing interest. How will the economy benefit and what changes are likely?

Today, Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan already enjoy a common territory. The prime ministers noted during recent meetings in Minsk that a considerable step forward has been made, adding that integration will continue to grow, with solutions offered in time. From July 1st, customs controls will shift to the external borders of the Customs Union, influencing the speed and volume of cargo flow. This will be, undoubtedly, benefit international carriers, enhancing transit and bringing revenue into the Belarusian budget. The rapid movement of capitals, goods and services is expected (which now remains hampered by barriers and

restrictions). The present integration aims to allow penetration into other markets — the key issue for Belarus, which is an export oriented and import dependent country.

Of course, each state has its own 'sensitive' positions, interests and agenda. According to manufacturers, it's difficult to compete with Russian commodities as energy prices differ 2-2.5-fold. Clearly, where one country needs oil and gas for its sustainable development, the other has its own interests. A compromise is needed. The economic situations also differ. Kazakhstan and Russia are feeling the pressure of Chinese capital and Belarus is trying to manage its negative trade balance. These issues were discussed in detail in Minsk, where Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Alexei Kudrin, assured journalists that measures adopted by the Belarusian Government should improve the situation. "Belarus adequately assesses the situation, with the

Government's measures already being implemented. A loan from the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund is part of its strategy," he noted.

Of course, we can't rely solely on the loan. Experts from the Government say that the deficit of trade balance requires that export revenue and attraction of investments be extended. Of course, the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space will favourably influence sales, opening a 170 million market to foreign capital. It will be vital to create conditions which are more favourable than those seen in neighbouring countries.

Naturally, it's easier to counteract global challenges together. For example, huge debt problems of Europe have forced investors to reduce their presence on developing markets. Our three countries may be affected but, if they competently assess the situation, they will undoubtedly find much to offer.

Positive migration balance preserved

By Vasily Malashenkov

Number of foreign citizens arriving in Belarus for permanent residence continues to exceed number of Belarusian citizens leaving

Igor Ignatovich, the Deputy Head of the Belarusian Interior Ministry's Department for Citizenship and Migration, has told journalists that, since the beginning of this year, around 2,000 Belarusians have left the country for permanent residence in another state, while almost 4,500 foreigners have arrived in our Republic with the same purpose.

In recent times, about 8,000 Belarusian residents have annually left the country, with around 12,000 foreigners coming to us — primarily from Russia and other CIS states.

In March 2010, a new Law On the Procedure for Exit from and Entry into the Republic of Belarus by Citizens of the Republic of Belarus came into force, simplifying the exit of children. Now, if one parent or guardian accompanies a child across the border, the permission of another isn't required.

If any conflict arises between parents, other exit procedures for the child may be established by court. If a child travels with a third person (e.g., a grandmother or an uncle), the permission of both parents is needed.

Last year, the EU changed requirements for passports of foreign entrants: at the time of entry, a passport should be no more than ten years old; it should expire no earlier than within three months after the declared date of return; and it should have at least two blank pages.

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