

# Security in the broadest sense

Official Minsk views CSTO as an important instrument for stability within post-Soviet space

By Vladimir Vasiliev

“The Collective Security Treaty Organisation has every opportunity to considerably enhance its international authority and its significance as a regional structure, efficiently maintaining security within the post-Soviet space,” noted Alexander Lukashenko, addressing his guests at the Minsk session of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers, hosted by the Belarus Hall of the Presidential Administration. “The situation in Northern Africa, in the Middle East and in other countries eloquently testifies to the importance of the regional format of security,” continued the Belarusian President. “Instability in one state can lead to escalation of tensions and destabilisation in neighbouring states.”

Mr. Lukashenko expressed hope that all CSTO member states will promptly co-ordinate their efforts, while the organisation itself, currently chaired by Belarus, will become ever more efficient. He is convinced that strengthening the organisation is in the interests of all member states, without exception. As Chair of the CSTO, Belarus is endeavouring to make its own contribution to this process, as can be seen from initiatives proposed by our country at the previous session of the Collective Security Council. “Our suggestions reflect the requirements of the contemporary geopolitical situation; they are not a Belarusian fantasy,” underlined the Head of State.

Mr. Lukashenko believes that, under these conditions, it's especially vital to co-ordinate the actions of CSTO member states within the international arena. “Foreign ministers should play a key role in bringing members closer and in elaborating single approaches, defending common interests,” noted the Belarusian leader. He is confident that the CSTO will manage to make a real breakthrough in jointly ensuring security within the post-Soviet space



Collective Security Treaty Organisation Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils hosted by Mir Castle

but believes political will, mutual trust and readiness to compromise for the sake of an alliance of force are vital. “I'm convinced that all these components are possessed by CSTO member states,” he emphasised.

The CSTO Secretary General, Nikolai Bordyuzha, informed Mr. Lukashenko that, in its work, the organisation is taking into account the latest events in Northern Africa and the Middle East, as well as new ‘trends in our countries’. Mr. Bordyuzha also added that business games are organised, modelling crisis situations.

Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, shared his assessments with the Belarusian President, requesting that journalists leave the room, to ensure privacy. Mr. Lavrov later commented, “Alexander Lukashenko said that the West's attempts to turn him, to

the detriment of Russia, are doomed to failure. He won't ever do anything that may contradict our brotherly union.”

The session of the CSTO Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils was hosted by Mir Castle, not far from Mir in the Grodno Region. Behind the ancient walls, once built to defend from foreign invaders, guests from Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan joined the CSTO Secretary General in discussing how best to counteract contemporary threats and challenges.

Historically, Mir Castle — owned by the Radziwiłłs — was never a significant fortress from a military aspect; it managed to avoid serious battles for centuries. Fortunately, the CSTO has never conducted real warfare in its history. However, life teaches us that we should be ready for any situation.

Accordingly, the CSTO organises joint exercises on combating terrorism, on liquidating the consequences of accidents and technogenic catastrophes, and on how to tackle other acute scenarios.

The session particularly tackled issues relating to the implementation of initiatives voiced by Belarus at Moscow's session in December 2010: peacekeeping and the institute of partnership. The CSTO Secretary General stressed that much has been done regarding peacekeeping, with consultations held at the UN. According to Mr. Bordyuzha, as far as the institute of partnership is concerned, such work is already being conducted in practice.

“We've discussed two major issues: the activity of the CSTO peacekeeping contingent and further implementation of the organisation's consultative

functions regarding foreign policy, security and defence,” explained Leonid Maltsev, the State Secretary of the Security Council. “Representatives of all member states have expressed their interest and readiness to define a course of action.” Mr. Maltsev underlined Minsk's position, saying, “We view the CSTO as the most important instrument of stability within the post-Soviet space.”

Mr. Bordyuzha admitted, “We still have problems equipping the Collective Rapid Response Forces — with weapons and equipment; there are problems regarding the crisis response mechanism. This is why the debate was hot. Moreover, in December, there will be a session of the CSTO Collective Security Council, with heads of state. By then, all issues should have been solved.”

## Strong bonds of liaison

By Lilia Morenkova

Delegation from Polish town of Sopot visits Grodnoinvest FEZ, as well as institutions of healthcare and education, sports and physical culture

“We have much in common,” stresses the Chairman of the Grodno City Executive Committee, Boris Kozelkov. “Both cities are capitals of prestigious festivals, with Sopot hosting its International Song Festival and Grodno welcoming the Festival of National Cultures.”

The first ties of co-operation have already been established, with fruitful contacts uniting Grodno's exhibition hall and Sopot's art gallery. Now, economic and investment collaboration is to be expanded.

The guests from Sopot were shown Grodno sights, visiting Mir, Novogrudok and Nesvizh. An exhibition by Polish artist Marek Okrassa also opened at Grodno's exhibition hall.

## Helpline available for those planning to travel abroad



La Strada's hotline

By Yelena Prusova

La Strada programme launches new hotline on safe migration

On dialling 113, callers can gain advice on moving or travelling abroad — be it for marriage, employment, education or holidaying. Consultants will be able to detail potential challenges, helping Belarusian citizens avoid falling prey to sexual or labour slavery. Information will be available on rules of emigration, as well as the risks and consequences of illegal employment abroad. Additionally, callers will be able to learn about the

real cost of living and salaries paid to legal and illegal workers. Advice will also be available on work contracts, helping avoid possible deceit. Phone numbers for Belarusian embassies and consulates abroad are provided, in addition to those for non-state organisations — which can render assistance free of charge in cases of emergency.

La Strada line also aims to help victims of modern slave traders, while providing advice to those searching for relatives abroad. Over 400 such applications have been received to date, with each being given help. La Strada provides e-consultations as well, which are now enjoying increasing popularity. It has been operational in Belarus since 2001, providing help to over 16,000 people regarding safe travel. A large database has been created, uniting almost a hundred countries worldwide. Its analytical and expert work never stops, with services being ever extended and improved upon. Having been launched as a small project, La Strada is now a national programme offering high quality social services and uniting the best experts in the field of migration.

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