

Profitable mutual relations supported by concrete actions

President Alexander Lukashenko notes that Belarus is ready to considerably increase its deliveries of agricultural products to the Russian market, speaking to the Governor of Novgorod Region, Sergei Mitin

On welcoming the Governor, Mr. Lukashenko noted that the development of relations with Russia and its regions is of major concern to Belarus. "You're a friendly country to us, with whom we're building our Union State and will continue to do so. With this in mind, contacts with Russian regions are important for us," the President stressed.

The Novgorod Region is among the major trading partners of Belarus. "Under today's conditions of global financial-economic instability and ever rising international competitiveness, it's necessary to use the whole potential of our economies, which are complementary," noted Mr. Lukashenko.

The Novgorod Region is now actively developing its agriculture, while giving attention to housing construction. Mr. Lukashenko believes that Belarus could be useful, having a well-qualified and experienced workforce, alongside modern production technologies. The Head of State emphasised that it's high time for Belarus and the Novgorod Region to shift relations to a new level, actively realising joint projects, rather than trade alone. "Belarus sees the Novgorod Region as a reliable and promising



Meeting Novgorod Region delegation in Minsk

partner," noted Mr. Lukashenko.

The President expressed his assurance that the visit of a large delegation — headed by the Governor — would contribute to the further development of Belarusian-Russian relations. He views Belarus and Russia as having achieved significant progress in the formation of a single customs and humanitarian space.

"We've advanced in our work to unify national legislation and provide closely co-ordinated foreign policy. Additionally, we're co-operating in the field of defence, security and counteraction of crime," the President explained. He added, "In honesty, we have a single state as regards our defence and crime fighting: our agencies efficiently collaborate."

According to the Head

of State, our joint efforts are creating conditions which allow Russians and Belarusians to feel at home in either territory. Mr. Lukashenko stressed, "Integration is not an end in itself. We must primarily lift all possible barriers between our states, while raising people's standard of living. People should feel that they benefit — both in Belarus and Russia — from the practi-

cal realisation of our integration. It will then receive nationwide support. In this respect, special hopes are being pinned upon the Single Economic Space."

The President believes that close and fruitful Belarus-Russia top level dialogue also contributes to the success of our joint initiatives. "We have no problems in our relations or in the co-ordination of any issue," he

asserts, adding that he has agreed to sign a contract with Russia to build a Belarusian nuclear power station. He views this as a great achievement, saying, "Such a decision is of the utmost importance for Belarus, so we're extremely grateful to Russia's leaders for keeping their word. Despite severe pressure from all sides, they have kept their promises. We'll build a nuclear power station. Moreover, we've already achieved much ourselves at the chosen site."

Mr. Mitin confirmed the desire to shift from mere commodity exchange between Belarus and the Novgorod Region to the realisation of joint projects. An agreement has been signed to implement a joint project regarding stock breeding for meat. As a positive example, the Governor mentioned co-operation with Belarus in plant growing: owing to Belarusian scientists, the Novgorod Region already harvests up to 70 centners of wheat per hectare.

Mr. Mitin also believes that much can be learnt from Belarus in the field of construction and that our country can take part in building a large logistical centre in the Novgorod Region.

Enhanced partnership ties lead to huge Latin American market

Colombia interested in establishing joint ventures with Belarus to produce agricultural machinery and equipment

By Piotr Sidorenko

"We hope for mutually beneficial co-operation. Colombia is agriculturally intensive and we know that the quality of Belarusian machinery is high. We want to share our experience with Belarus in manufacturing industrial products, establishing joint production," explained the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, Patti Londono Jaramillo, speaking in Minsk.

Colombia is keen to buy Belarusian heavy-duty dump trucks and passenger and cargo vehicles, in addition to agricultural machinery and equipment.



Guests from Colombia show interest

Already, there have been several pilot projects to supply Belarusian tractors and equipment to Colombia, with a Belkommun-mash trolleybus sent to Colombia for testing.

Colombia is eager to establish links with CIS states and, this year, sent a delegation to Russia. After visiting Belarus, our foreign guests plan to go to Ukraine, Kazakhstan

and Azerbaijan. In Minsk, they have held a meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Sergei Aleinik.

Colombia, with its 45m population, is a promising partner for Belarus in South America, especially as we already co-operate within the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international organisations. Currently, our volume of trade is small but it is rapidly increasing. Belarus' major exports to Colombia are potash and nitrogen fertilisers, with sales of Belarusian tyres also rising. Imports from Colombia traditionally comprise flowers, sugar and bananas.

