

Comprehensive dialogue across ocean presenting prospects

Alexander Lukashenko meets Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration of the Republic of Ecuador, Ricardo Patino Aroca, who's paying his first visit to Belarus

By Igor Slavinsky

On meeting his South American guest, Mr. Lukashenko joked that only few planes in the world travel directly from Ecuador to Belarus and thanked Ricardo Patino Aroca for making such a long flight. He stressed that 'we're ready to conduct dialogue with your country, while developing co-operation' and 'we have absolutely no restrictions or closed topics'. Mr. Lukashenko invited his guest to build business relations directly or trilaterally via Venezuela.

Successful co-operation between Belarus and Venezuela is not only valuable in itself but serves as an example to other Latin American states — such as Ecuador. When first contacts between Minsk and Caracas began, the distance between our continents was a little restraining. However, now that Belarus has gained a strong foothold, including with Venezuelan deposits, the 11,000km distance between Minsk and Ecuador's capital of Quito is irrelevant. The interests of our two states coincide, as does our desire to collaborate; no obstacles surmount such determination.

Ecuador resembles Ven-



Belarus ready to actively develop interaction with Ecuador — similar to Belarusian-Venezuelan co-operation

ezuela in many respects, adhering to an independent policy in its politics and relying on oil extraction to generate revenue — alongside the sale of bananas, flowers and coffee. Mr. Lukashenko noted with satisfaction that Belarus and Ecuador 'already enjoy a respectable turnover, de-

spite their distance' [\$40m a year]. "We have contacts and already collaborate, so let's shift this experience to other spheres, enhancing it further," he emphasised.

Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration is responsible not only for diplomacy but for foreign economic

relations — as seen from the official name of his post. Ricardo Patino Aroca told the President that his talks with Belarusian colleague Sergei Martynov had been fruitful. "We'll search for common ground in the domestic and foreign sphere," he noted, adding that Minsk and Quito aim

to develop trade-economic relations. He believes that 'the potential for growth in this sphere is huge'. The shift from 'mere trade to co-operative ties' is now vital.

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry hopes to collaborate regarding exploration and mining of oil and other

mineral deposits. Meanwhile, Ecuador's 15 million population is in need of transport infrastructure, accommodation and factories: areas in which Belarus is currently helping Venezuela. Ricardo Patino Aroca has officially invited Mr. Lukashenko to visit Quito 'at any convenient time'.

Favourable environment for profitable business

According to Narendra Nagmani, Director of Indian World White Business Solutions, who takes part in business forum in Vitebsk, Belarus boasts good investment climate

"Belarus and India have long maintained business contacts. The conditions created in your country for investors appeal to us: there are no problems with receiving information and local authorities are keen to attract business partners, ensuring all necessary support," notes Mr. Nagmani.

During the business forum in Vitebsk, the Indian investor was eager to set up business contacts for the implementation of projects in the pharmaceutical and tourist spheres.

Ministers co-ordinate plan



Meeting at Foreign Ministry

Memorandum to establish joint commission for trade and economic co-operation signed by Belarus and Ecuador

On meeting the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration of the Republic of Ecuador, Ricardo Patino Aroca, Belarus' Foreign Minister, Sergei Martynov, stressed that the present meetings and arrangements will lay a strong foundation for more vigor-

ous co-operation between our states. He believes that Belarus and Ecuador enjoy wonderful political relations, interacting well within the international arena. However, he is convinced that our bilateral relations should be cemented by economic links. The parties discussed exchanging trade and economic delegations and agreed to prepare a common action plan to identify major co-operation trends.

The ministers acknowledged the need to intensify the development of legislation while preparing framework agreements on trade and economic co-operation, education and visa free travel for holders of diplomatic and service passports. In addition, Ecuador has suggested signing an agreement on sci-tech collaboration.

Ricardo Patino Aroca noted that Ecuador is ready to become a platform for Belarus to join the Latin American market. He expressed confidence that our bilateral relations will gain strength.

Evidently, Ecuador is a promising partner for Belarus in South America. Our bilateral trade may be insignificant at present, but steady growth has been evident. Belarus' major exports to Ecuador are potash and nitrogen fertilisers, with the supply of tyres rising continuously.

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