

Principal view on real integration

Minsk hosted the Heads of State session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council under the chairmanship of the President of Belarus. The agenda of the meeting tackled the progress on the draft Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as the implementation of the plan of action (a 'roadmap') aiming at Armenia's joining of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space.

By Vladimir Khromov

"The Eurasian Economic Union must be based on a fully-fledged Customs Union. There should be no restrictions on the movement of goods between its members no matter how sensitive they are," Belarusian President, Alexander Lukashenko said at the session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, hosted in Minsk on April 29th.

Before the meeting, the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia had a two-hour informal meeting and exchanged views on economic issues, the existing problems, the prospects for relations and some issues of the international agenda.

The agenda for the meeting suggested two important topics: the progress on the draft Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union and the aforementioned roadmap on Armenia's accession to the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Opening the session in a narrow format, Mr. Lukashenko admitted that there are a number of issues nowadays on which the

partners disagree and that the list of these issues is alarming. "We have gathered here to resolve them," he said. "There is little time left before we sign the treaty and a question arises — with what will we approach the union? They suggest leaving unresolved issues as they are, though these issues were supposed to be removed during the previous stages. We strongly believe that we should reach certain milestones, and that one of them is a fully-fledged Customs Union. No restrictions should be left between its member states, no matter how sensitive these issues are," stressed the President of Belarus. In his view, a negative precedent will be created if the partners preserve any restrictions on the movement of goods, in particular, energy resources.

The President of Belarus believes that the efficiency of the union will be crucial for its attractiveness to other states. "Meanwhile, the union itself should acquire greater integrity from its expansion," said the Belarusian leader.

"No one pushes us. We set the time schedule ourselves, but I think that we should not turn it



It is necessary to complete the difficult path to the Eurasian Economic Union

into the process for the sake of the process," the President of Belarus said.

As far as the second point of the agenda is concerned, Belarus suggests admitting new members on a package principle, providing no special conditions and statuses. "I believe it will be fair, first of all, in respect to the countries that have implemented every stage of this integration process in full," said the Head of the Belarusian state.

Alexander Lukashenko:

By January 1st, 2015, we should be able to answer the questions of our citizens: Where have we come and what have our states received as a result? We should have these answers.

Kazakhstan President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, views the current disagreements on the way to the Eurasian Economic Union as resolvable. He noted that the parties have done a lot of work, while other partners show interest in the new union. The Kazakh President also drew attention to the fact that

this year marks the 20th anniversary of Eurasian integration.

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, also acknowledged that there are a number of unresolved issues regarding the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), yet he expressed confidence that the parties can further explore them and find a compromise.

According to him, the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan is already functioning and yields real benefits. "We have seen the results in the economic performance of our countries," he emphasised.

After the session, the presidents instructed the finalisation of all the details of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union in the shortest time possible, and submission of the document for signing at the Troika Summit in Astana on May 29th. This task has been set before the Eurasian Economic Commission and the governments of the three countries.

The draft Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union includes a large number of codified documents of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space and

about 70 international treaties, as well as new rules which have been developed in furtherance of the draft treaty and which apply to the segments of the common market which were not included previously, particularly the energy sector and the market for services.

As for Armenia's accession to the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space, the document will be drafted by June 1st, 2014 and will be submitted for consideration by the Heads of State at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council meeting, hosted in Astana on May 29th.

After the extended session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, the Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission Board, Victor Khristenko, noted that all major disagreements regarding the draft Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union have been settled.

"At present, all major disagreements on the draft treaty have been resolved," said Mr. Khristenko. He also added that some bilateral issues still remained unsolved and that their discussion would be continued.

Necessity to revise *Eastern Partnership* voiced in Budapest

By Vasily Khmelevsky

Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Yelena Kupchina, suggested specifying of the *Eastern Partnership* initiative after five years of its realisation, taking into account contemporary challenges and the development of the situation in the region. She made this statement at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group and *Eastern Partnership* member states.

Ms. Kupchina presented Belarus' approach regarding the implementation and further development of the *Eastern Partnership* initiative. She underlined the utmost respect of the basic principles of equality, non-discrimination and mutual responsibility, fixed in the 2009 Prague Declaration, alongside the consideration



of priorities, needs and interests of the partner-states on the basis of the principle of differentiation. Moreover, the Deputy Foreign Minister stressed the importance of giving the *Eastern Partnership* initiative an inclusive status, enhancing the level of transparency for the sake of securing sustainability and efficiency of the initiative.

Ms. Kupchina held a number of bilateral meetings, including with the

European Union Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle and the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Drulák. The parties discussed the prospects of Belarus-EU cooperation, as well as a number of issues related to bilateral interaction.

While in Budapest, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus also met with the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, who heads the Hungarian side of the Belarusian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Co-operation, the Hungarian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Zsolt Németh and Hungarian businessmen. The officials discussed the development of bilateral political, trade-economic and investment co-operation.

