
Press statements following Russia-EU summit

4 June 2012, 14:30, St Petersburg

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA VLADIMIR PUTIN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

The 29th Russia-European Union summit has just ended. Our meeting was certainly useful. Russia and the EU face common challenges, especially in the economy and the financial sector, and this requires us to take timely action to coordinate our approaches to the similar tasks we must address.

I think my colleagues will agree that this summit has reaffirmed the priority nature of the Russia-EU strategic partnership and our common understanding of the need to move forward so that people in both Russia and the EU feel the tangible benefits our partnership brings.

We updated our colleagues on developments in the integration processes underway in the CIS area, including with regard to their prospective impact on shaping relations between Russia and the EU. We are sure that the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, and in the future perhaps the Eurasian Economic Union too, are entirely compatible with the objectives of strengthening Russia's relations with the EU.

It was important of course to discuss work on the new basic agreement between Russia and the EU. Both sides reiterated their interest in drafting a document that will set out strategic goals that meet today's needs.

The new basic agreement's trade and economic section is the main stumbling block at the moment. We agreed to continue informal consultations to find mutually acceptable solutions to the issues involved. We examined together the trade and economic cooperation opportunities that Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation opens up and discussed how we can use these opportunities to develop our trade and economic ties and settle the remaining problems.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the EU and the European Commission for consistently supporting the Russian Federation in its accession to the World Trade Organisation.

We also discussed the matter of introducing visa-free travel between Russia and the EU countries. The existing visa barriers are clearly putting a brake on development of our humanitarian contacts and economic ties.

We analysed the progress made so far in implementing the Partnership for Modernisation joint initiative. We will continue this work so as to carry out a number of big joint projects involving the Russian and EU business communities and our

financial institutions. Our big financial institutions have already concluded agreements in this area.

Energy cooperation was one of the main subjects of discussion at the plenary session and is one of the main areas of our economic cooperation. There are still some matters that require additional examination and regulation, but I hope that, given the proven importance of Russia-EU cooperation in energy sector, we will find solutions acceptable to both sides.

We drew our partners' attention to what we consider a sore point – the unilateral EU decision to extend the European emission quota system to cover third-party countries' civil aviation starting from January 1, 2012.

We discussed the humanitarian dialogue between Russia and the EU and examined the main issues on the international agenda, the situation in Syria, Iran, the Middle East, and a number of other regions.

Summing up, I want to say that today's discussion was productive. Of course, our views do not coincide on all issues, but I think we succeeded in reaffirming our commitment to our chosen course and have sent a clear political signal in favour of intensifying our cooperation. Now we must keep up the pace and keep moving forward.

I thank our partners and the experts who worked hard to prepare today's meeting. Thank you very much for your attention.

PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL HERMAN VAN ROMPUY:

Thank you for your hospitality. It has been a pleasure to have been invited here to this beautiful place in the vicinity of St Petersburg.

This is my first summit with you, Mr President. But it is my clear understanding that we even this time, at the 29th EU-Russia summit, have confirmed our joint commitment to further develop the EU-Russia strategic partnership.

As you all know, the results of the two last years are remarkable: the Russian WTO accession, the Partnership for Modernisation, and the common steps towards visa-free travel. The EU-Russia relationship is enjoying its best dynamics for years.

However, there is still much we need to do in order to untap what is potentially possible.

Strong political will and hard work will therefore be needed even in the coming years.

I therefore welcome President Putin's commitment to bringing this work further together with the EU.

We had also talks on our broad bilateral agenda and on global issues, such as the economy, and some of the more pressing international issues. I would like to highlight the following points.

First, on the economy. For Europe these are testing times. But we are driven by a clear determination to work our way through the challenges.

We are aiming at strengthening growth in the European Union. There are many initiatives in the making, and we will take further decisions for growth and jobs and the European Council in June.

We are also addressing systemic challenges for the Economic and Monetary Union as such. We must strengthen the monetary union by more banking, fiscal, economic integration and enhanced governance and democratic accountability. I'm working on building blocks for the deepening of the Economic Monetary Union in close cooperation with, inter alia, the President of the European Commission and report to European Council in June.

Let me be clear, there is no way back for the Euro. There is only the way ahead towards more integration.

We want Greece to stay in the eurozone, while respecting its commitments.

Second, on the EU-Russia bilateral relationship: we reconfirmed that the best basis for a closer partnership should be an ambitious and comprehensive bilateral new agreement that includes trade and investments. In this context we look forward to the ratification of Russia's WTO accession.

The idea of the Eurasian Economic Union, if based on the WTO-rules, could lead to positive contribution to trade, prosperity and cooperation.

Third, the EU wants to be Russia's partner in its modernisation. That is why I see the further development of the Partnership for Modernisation as one of the priorities in our relations. It should be a partnership that covers all aspects of modernisation: the economy, society and the rule of law.

I made the point today that a vibrant civil society should in this respect be seen as an integral part for real modernisation. The greater engagement of civil society opens opportunities for the further development of political institutions and pluralism in Russia, which should not be missed. Civil society was a force of progress in our own history and they can be one in yours, in Russia's.

Four, visa-free travel remains our common goal. Easier contacts between people are the backbone of closer relations and benefits all of us. I therefore welcome the active work on the implementation of the "common steps", and the progress made in negotiations on an upgraded EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement.

Five, on human rights. It is welcome that Russia shows readiness for public debate on human rights, as exemplified by the recent hearing in the Russian State Duma. This is a recognition that human rights concerns are a matter of direct concern to all. And that is why these issues together with the rule of law and preservations of political rights need to be addressed.

We have invited Russia to the next round of EU-Russia Human Rights consultations to Brussels on June 29. Next time, we hope for Russia to host the consultations.

Finally, we had discussions on a range of foreign policy issues.

On Syria, let me first say that the situation is appalling. The Syrian regime should immediately cease all forms of violence and provide its full support to the UN Supervision Mission (UNSMIS).

The European Union and Russia might have some diverging assessments, but we fully agree that the Annan Plan as a whole provides the best opportunity to break the cycle of violence in Syria, avoiding a civil war, and in finding a peaceful lasting solution.

We need to combine our efforts in order for this to happen, and to find common messages on which we agree. We need to work towards an immediate stop of all forms of violence in Syria, and towards process of political transition.

On Iran, we agree on the urgent need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The EU and Russia are working closely together and with other partners on this issue, and we look forward to the next round of talks in Moscow, where the EU High Representative, Cathy Ashton, will lead the negotiations of six countries with Iran.

As regards our common neighbourhood, I reiterated the EU's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We believe Russia should fully implement the 2008 commitments.

Lastly, the EU welcomes Russia's constructive approach in the '5+2' negotiations in the Transnistria conflict.

Mr President, it has been a pleasure to have attended this constructive summit. I look forward to seeing you in Brussels next time.

PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION JOSE MANUEL BARROSO:

President Putin,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank President Putin for his warm welcome here in the St Petersburg region.

I have always valued a frank and open dialogue with President Putin. Indeed, we had this kind of dialogue during this summit. I believe it is particularly appropriate that we hold this EU-Russia summit so early in the beginning of this mandate of the President of Russia and also in the beginning of a new government.

Russia and Europe are experiencing important political, economic and social transformations. A new cycle is opening and this offers us the opportunity to look ahead and think strategically on our cooperation, what we want to achieve and where we want to be in five years' time and further ahead.

In recent years we have made significant progress on a number of issues, namely on the agreement for Russia's WTO accession – an objective that as you know the

European Union and the European Commission have always supported. There was also some progress on visa and mobility, and on our Partnership for Modernisation. Therefore the purpose of this summit was to consolidate the progress achieved and to launch the basis for a closer cooperation.

Last evening we had a comprehensive exchange of views on the global economic situation and the latest developments in Russia and in Europe. Let me on this regard just mention our full confidence in the future of the euro area and of the European Union. In fact the debate now in the European Union is not how we are going to undo the integration. The debate is about how we are going to further deepen the integration to complement our monetary union with a full economic union, including in some areas like the banking sector supervision and also in some fiscal aspects.

So, no one should be in any doubt – there is absolute commitment in the European Union and in the euro area to the euro and to the solidity and further integration of all our efforts. And I think this is important for Russia, because Russia is our largest neighbour and a very close strategic partner. We should build upon our strong ties and advance the negotiations on the new comprehensive EU-Russia Agreement, which should cover all the relevant areas of our partnership, including trade, investment and energy provisions and lay the basis of a closer relation. I am convinced that with the firm commitment of both sides we will achieve a balanced and ambitious agreement that will be both beneficial for Russia and for the European Union.

The EU is already Russia's biggest commercial partner, accounting for around 50% of all Russian trade. It is also the biggest source of foreign direct investment. The EU is the biggest client of the most important export from Russia, I mean energy. And Russia's WTO accession opens additional opportunities for trade and for the development of our bilateral economic relations. We believe this can be very important for the future.

Our Partnership for Modernisation is now in a phase of full implementation and I am happy to say that President Putin sees it as a priority. Russia is engaged in a very important process and we are very proud to be partners of Russia in that regard.

Building a partnership between our societies means also having closer relations between our peoples. This is why visa issues and mobility issues are so important. We are now engaged in the implementation of the “common steps towards visa-free travel” that we launched in the last summit. We welcome the substantial progress made in negotiations on an upgraded EU-Russia Visa Waiver Agreement, which should be finalised soon. Positive developments in this field have clear potential benefits to our citizens and for people-to-people contacts.

On energy, we welcome the progress in the energy dialogue and the close EU-Russia energy partnership. I stressed that a reliable, transparent and rules-based energy framework remains a key priority for the EU.

This summit confirmed the important common interests that we share and our willingness to build stronger relations and work even closer together. As the most famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, who studied, lived and died in St Petersburg, once wrote: “we can try and fail, but we should not fail to try.” The European Union

is looking forward to try - and not to fail - is looking forward to try and to succeed.
And I am sure that we will succeed in the partnership with Russia.

I thank you for your attention.