*Address by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU*

*Ambassador Vladimir Chizhov at the Reception on the occasion of*

*the Day of the Diplomatic Worker*

*Brussels, 8 February 2013*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to offer you a brief word of welcome to the celebration of the Day of Diplomat. This professional holiday, introduced in Russia in 2002, commemorates the establishment of the first organized Russian state institution responsible for maintaining foreign relations, which historical records date back to February 10th, 1549. Called «Posolsky Prikaz» in Russian, it could roughly be translated as «Ambassadors’ Court».

Remarkably, out of its five departments no less than three dealt with lands that currently comprise the European Union, ranging from the Holy Roman Empire to the Hanseatic League. Since then the winds of time have vastly rearranged the geopolitical landscape of the European continent. As for the «Ambassadors’ Court», in 1703 it was transformed by Peter the Great into the College for Foreign Affairs, then in 1802 by Alexander the First into the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution the Ministry was restyled as Peoples’ Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, but in 1946 reverted back to its time-honoured name.

Nevertheless throughout the stormy history of Russian diplomacy relations with our European neighbours have invariably lain at its very core. That is why today I take great pleasure in re-emphasizing the truly strategic nature that the Russia-EU relationship has acquired over the past decades, spanning dynamically evolving trade and economic ties as well as vibrant foreign policy interaction at various levels. Just as the commonality of our history, culture and humanistic values as well as economic interests inspires us to work towards a stronger Russia-EU strategic partnership, Russia’s and EU’s leading role on the continent entails joint responsibility for regional stability and security. It is therefore with a sense of confidence and optimism that I look towards the future of Russian diplomacy in its relations with the EU.