



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**

**Brussels, 7 December 2010
PCE 301/10**

**Remarks by
Herman VAN ROMPUY
President of the European Council
at the press conference following the EU-Russia Summit**

It has been a pleasure to welcome President Medvedev to Brussels after our summit in Rostov-on-Don at the end of May this year. First of all I congratulated him on Russia's victory in the bid to host the World Cup in 2018. It is an important prospect for the Russian people and for the world. There were other interesting candidacies but I sincerely congratulate Russia for that victory.

Today we have had a good summit, open and fruitful discussions, we will continue our discussions at dinner building upon the friendly and constructive atmosphere that came out of the summit in Rostov in the first semester of this year.

One of the most valuable features of our strategic partnership is that we can discuss a wide range of issues - both those on which we have converging and those on which we have diverging views. Let me highlight a few elements:

First, we had a chance to exchange views on the global economy, and on the economic situation in the EU and in Russia, respectively. The economic recovery remains fragile and uneven between member states, I for my part made it clear that the recovery in the EU is visibly under way. We are encouraged by the prospects ahead.

Second, the EU and Russia have taken some important positive steps regarding our bilateral relationship: I am particularly rejoiced by the fact that the EU and Russia have concluded their bilateral negotiations on the WTO, and we agree that we should now focus on the multilateral negotiations so that Russia can become a member of the WTO as soon as possible. This is a paramount step forward. And a step the world is closely watching. We now wish for a push on other parts of our bilateral agenda, mainly the negotiations on the New Agreement.

I am also happy for the good progress made on the Partnership for Modernisation and that we now have a common view on how to move forward towards an eventual visa-free travel regime.

These forthcoming decisions from your side, Mr President, are clear proof of your overall commitment to taking the path to modernisation.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Dirk De Backer - Spokesperson of the President - ■ +32 (0)2 281 9768 - +32 (0)497 59 99 19
Jesús Carmona - Deputy Spokesperson of the President ■ +32 (0)2 281 9548 / 6319 - +32 (0)475 65 32 15
e-mail: press.president@consilium.europa.eu - internet: www.european-council.europa.eu/vanrompuy

EN

We now have a chance to prove that good and close EU-Russia cooperation is not only important at the strategic level, but has tangible consequences for the wellbeing of our societies. Not just interesting for our diplomats, how important they may be, but for our citizens. We need, however, to keep this momentum so that we follow up on this progress and make it real. I am fully confident that Russia will deliver.

Third, we follow closely and appreciate very highly President Medvedev's personal commitment to the cause of modernisation of Russia. I deliver the message on behalf of the Heads of State or Government of the EU's 27 Member States when I encourage you on working on Russia's modernisation based on democratic values, by building a modern economy, and by encouraging the active involvement of civil society. The European Union wishes to be Russia's partner in this historic endeavour. In this regard we take note of your efforts to push for political, judicial and economic reforms in Russia.

Fourth, I recalled to President Medvedev the questions and concerns of our Member States and in general the European public have about the situation for human rights defenders and journalists in Russia and particularly in the Northern Caucasus. I welcomed his personal involvement to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, strongly encouraging him to translate statements into action. The EU-Russia Human Rights dialogue remains an important element in our bilateral relationship.

Fifth, we discussed a number of sensitive issues in our common neighbourhood, also in the light of the outcome of the OSCE summit in Astana, where President Medvedev, President Barroso and I took part.

We still face unresolved, protracted conflicts which are a threat to the stability and security to both the European Union and Russia. The EU is actively engaged in efforts to ensure long-lasting and peaceful solutions to these conflicts. Three examples stand out.

The EU has made specific proposals for an early resumption of the formal negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement process.

We also have re-emphasised the principles of peaceful settlement proposed by the Minsk Group as the best option to reach an agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh. We welcome the personal efforts of the Russian President to ease tensions and find solutions.

We have called for restoring a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia and for renewed efforts to deal with both the security situation and humanitarian and human rights issues, consistent with the 2008 cease-fire agreement, and with full respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. Close cooperation with Russia on the above is the key to success. Progress in this field will create momentum for EU-Russia cooperation in general.

The EU and Russia are real strategic partners who try to find solutions for common problems. The direction of our relations is towards more convergence. The political will is really present to go ahead with modernisation in all fields of society. The union itself is also involved in a broad movement of reforms, indispensable in a highly competitive world.