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President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso  
following the EU-Russia Summit**

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Joint press conference with Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and Dmitry Medvedev, President of Russia

**Brussels, 7 December 2010**

Good afternoon.

It was indeed a pleasure to receive President Medvedev, for this very important EU-Russia Summit.

Of course we congratulated President Medvedev on Russia's successful bid for the World Football Championship! Football today is one of the most effective ways of communicating to the entire world, making people feel closer.

We also achieved very important progress, mainly in three areas: trade, partnership for modernisation and visa.

On trade, it was a milestone. I remember we have been discussing this issue for a long time. If I may make a personal remark, this was my 13<sup>th</sup> Summit with Russia and 13 in fact is a lucky number, because today the Commissioner for trade and the Minister for trade of the Russian Federation were able to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the settling of bilateral issues regarding WTO accession by Russia. We believe this is a milestone, because Russia becoming a WTO member in 2011 is now a very realistic perspective. We will continue to support it.

We believe WTO accession will strengthen trade and investment rules in Russia itself and will therefore be beneficial to Russian businesses and its citizens and also for trade and investment with the European Union. This was in fact a very important success.

It should also have a positive impact on our ongoing negotiations on a New EU-Russia Agreement. We want this to be a solid, ambitious agreement, with substantive provisions in all key areas, including trade, investment and energy. We believe it is very important to ensure a rule-based business environment in Russia and I am sure that the European and Russian Entrepreneurs that we will meet this afternoon will share this view.

A second area of progress is our Partnership for Modernisation following an initiative from President Medvedev, and I really want to thank him and congratulate him for that very important historic initiative, that we have agreed to launch last June in Rostov-on-Don.

A comprehensive progress report has been drawn up by our coordinators, as well as a rolling Work Plan. It contains a set of detailed priorities, from better coordinating business regulations and bolstering the rule of law in Russia to environmental protection. Of course, we have agreed in Rostov that it is not just about technology, but also about a world organisation, including the very important issues, already mentioned, of rule of law.

The fact that I want to underline is that apart from the good intentions, we have now a very concrete plan on the development of concrete actions around this partnership for modernisation.

The final point I would like to mention is the real progress on the visa issue. This is of great importance to Russia and to the European Union. I know it is very important for the Russian citizens and I think our ministers have found an understanding on how to proceed. We will now start elaborating a list of common steps and the implementation of those concrete steps will open the way for talks on a EU-Russia Visa Waiver Agreement.

These were the main topics of what I believe was probably the best summit in which I have participated so far with Russia.

We also discussed other matters, but I am not now going into details – energy issues; our cooperation in the G20; I am very much looking forward to the cooperation next year during the French Presidency of the G20; climate change; the conference in Cancun, where we also discussed the prospects to make it a positive step, because we have a shared goal to fight climate change - many areas where the European Union and Russia are working together.

So I really think that we can say today that the range and depth of our discussions, and the very good atmosphere in which they were held, show that our strategic partnership is certainly no empty catchphrase.

Like good friends, we discuss issues, frankly and constructively, including topics where our views may diverge, and we try to find common ground.

Our mutual interdependence is a reality. It is therefore not only in our shared interest but a political imperative for both sides to work together, as closely as possible, and on as many issues as possible.

Because I know that this is the spirit of Russia, I now want to thank once again President Medvedev for the constructive and open way in which he engaged with us, the European Union, and I think that was a very successful summit.