



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks of Herman Van Rompuy,
President of the European Council,
following the 28th EU-Russia Summit**

I am very pleased to welcome you again to Brussels. This is our fourth summit together, and the 28th EU-Russia Summit in all. As always, I appreciated our discussions on the range of issues within the EU-Russia relationship and on the broader issues that set the context for our cooperation.

Two years ago, at our first summit together in Rostov-on Don, I said that we were in a defining time for both Russia and the EU.

I would say this is even more true today. Both the EU and Russia are at important crossroads. The political and economic developments have continued transforming the global and domestic landscape rapidly.

We, the EU, are maneuvering our way through the sovereign debt crisis. Last week's European Council in Brussels brought important decisions, both in the short and medium term to stabilize the situation and to build further a new architecture for the economic and monetary union.

We agreed on a new fiscal compact, stronger economic coordination, stronger crisis mechanisms and on more resources to the IMF. In addition, Member States are implementing ambitious fiscal and reform programmes to restore confidence and the ECB has taken important measures that should alleviate the pressure on the banks, also on their medium term funding.

We are on our way to bringing back confidence to the euro zone. The path is difficult, and the route is still long. Continued political determination will be the key to success.

The questions and tasks facing Russia are equally demanding.

P R E S S

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You have set an ambitious vision for Russia's modernisation in the 21st century. A vision based on a modern economy and ensuring further political reform.

I will repeat what I said two years ago: the EU wants to be Russia's partner in its modernisation. We are indeed Strategic Partners. In many ways we are strongly interdependent. In a spirit of mutual benefit we can only win by deepening our cooperation even further.

The results of the last two years are remarkable. Today's summit is the proof. It is a summit of results:

Russian WTO-accession is the major achievement. It is a leverage for modernisation. It opens a myriad of new opportunities for trade, investment and global growth.

We have now high expectations on the possibilities to move ahead on the New Agreement with Russia.

On mobility, approving the common steps, and amendments on the visa-waiver agreements is an important step further to visa free travel, and opens up for more people-to-people contacts. This will further open up Russia to the EU and the EU to Russia.

The principles and values of our strategic partnership are also being tested and evaluated on the basis of developments in political fields. Indeed, the support of European public opinion to our developing strategic partnership is an important asset, closely related to this field.

In this context, the Union paid keen attention to the conduct of the Duma elections last week, and we had an honest discussion on these issues at the summit. Free and fair elections, the respect for Human Rights and the rule of law, freedom of speech and the right of assembly are key for democracies. We welcome the fact that 500 election observers were invited to the Duma elections.

We are, concerned by irregularities and lack of fairness as reported by ODIHR, other observers, as well as by parts of the Russian public. And we are concerned by the detention of protesters. In contrast the recent large demonstrations were peaceful and the authorities in my view handled it very well.

We, therefore, welcome your pledge and commitment, Mr. President, to investigate in a fair and impartial manner reports about electoral problems.

We hope that Russia will cooperate well with OSCE/ODIHR, to ensure a smooth monitoring of the Presidential elections.

We also touched upon a number of international and regional issues, both in the South and in the East. Russia is one of our main interlocutors. Today, as always, I appreciated our open and constructive exchange.

First, we confirmed the need to deepen our cooperation on the protracted conflicts in our common neighbourhood. We welcomed the resumption of formal 5+2 talks on Transnistria.

On Georgia, the EU welcomes the spirit of compromise that gave way to the bilateral agreement on the Russian WTO-accession. I hope this can be built upon. In this context, obligations as agreed in the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 have to be implemented.

Second, on the Arab Spring. It is our shared interest in the international community at large, the EU and Russia, that it goes in the right direction of more democracy, more social justice, rule of law and transparency.

On Syria, more specifically, I asked for Russian support to the action by the UN Security Council and to the Arab League Plan.

The nuclear programme of Iran remains an issue of major concern. Our close cooperation based on common views with Russia remains of critical importance in order to find a diplomatic solution.

Mr President, to conclude, much of the progress harvested here today is due to your personal commitment to a productive and constructive EU-Russia relationship. The EU will work to stay this course also in the coming years.
