



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



St Petersburg, 4 June 2012
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**Press remarks by Herman Van Rompuy,
President of the European Council,
following the EU-Russia Summit**

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.

P R E S S

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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 concern 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 29 June. 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.
