



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Press statement
by the President of the European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
following the 30th EU-Russia Summit**

Today we held our 30th EU-Russia Summit. This is a real tribute to the important nature of our partnership. It demonstrates the priority which we attach to this strategic relationship.

Russia and the EU have a lot to gain from cooperating. Our economies are strongly linked: 45 % of Russia's exports go to the EU, while 35 % of Russia's imports come from the EU. We are neighbours on our continent. More than 5 million Schengen visas were issued in 2011 in Russia. We may have different positions in some areas but we have more common interests. We must work together to guarantee security and stability on the European continent, to tackle global challenges and governance issues, and to promote economic growth.

We have had a positive and constructive working summit. It provided us with an important occasion to take stock of main developments and to review progress and challenges across the wide range of EU-Russia relations. We also discussed how we can deepen our cooperation and implement already agreed commitments.

Our Partnership for Modernisation works. We have taken note of the latest Progress Report, and welcome the good results achieved in many areas.

Further progress has to be made in the negotiations towards a New Agreement, which can put our future relations on a solid legal basis. The EU is very eager to progress faster in these negotiations.

P R E S S

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We have discussed domestic economic developments in Russia and the EU. I explained the decisions of last week's European Council regarding the strengthening of the EMU and the huge progress we made in stabilising the euro zone.

The EU is deeply convinced that we need to create space for civil society activities in order to achieve an effective modernisation of the economy and of the society.

We have noted the outcome of our latest Human Rights Consultations on 7 December which provided a useful occasion to discuss our concerns on the freedom for civil society activities and the exercise of fundamental rights in Russia. I mentioned also other concerns, including the case of Sergey Magnitsky.

As regards foreign policy, we have discussed ways to deepen our political cooperation at global level. We already work well together on issues like the Middle East Peace Process, Afghanistan or Iran.

We have to continue our efforts to find a peaceful political solution on Syria in full support of Mr Brahimi's efforts.

Russia and the EU work closely together in the Quartet, and we remain committed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this respect I would like to highlight the joint statement by Foreign Minister Lavrov and High Representative Ashton today on the Middle East Peace Process.

As regards our Common Neighbourhood, I highlighted the need to achieve stability and security as well as democracy and a market-oriented economy. This is the aim of EU's support within the Eastern Partnership Programme, especially as regards to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

We welcome that the elections in Georgia open up new opportunities to improve bilateral relations and work towards stability in the Southern Caucasus, on the basis of the respect for territorial integrity.

It is particularly important to address the protracted conflicts. I also raised the importance of moving forward in the '5+2' talks on the conflict in Transnistria and expressed concerns regarding developments in Ngorno-Karabakh.

By working together, the EU and Russia can make a decisive contribution to global governance and regional conflict resolution, to global economic governance in the G 8 and G 20, and to a broad range of international and regional issues. I would like to congratulate President Putin for taking over the presidency of G 20.

I am pleased that President Putin and the EU have discussed all these issues openly in a very constructive atmosphere. I want to thank the President of the Russian Federation for the constructive and productive exchange.