

## Solana upbeat over EU-Russia summit

18/11/200900:46

RIA Novosti interviews European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana ahead of the November 17 EU-Russia summit.



**Q. *What are your expectations from the summit?***

A. I look forward to a good summit. We have a lot to talk about, not only our bilateral relations but also a number of critical issues on the international agenda, such as climate change, energy security and European security. Both the EU and Russia have important responsibilities on these issues.

We will also share our views on the latest developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the situation Middle East and the latest events in Iran and its nuclear programme. The Western Balkans and the South Caucasus will also be on the agenda. I am sure that on all those issues we will have a fruitful discussions.

**Q. *How do you assess EU-Russia relations? Do they need a restart?***

A. I think EU-Russia relations are good, and I do not see a need for a restart. Of course there are issues where we disagree and where we would like Russia to do things differently, but Russia is a key partner on the international scene and we have a deep, multi-faceted, far-reaching relationship with your country.

We have now had six rounds of negotiations on a new cooperation agreement and the seventh round is due to take place before the end of the year. Throughout these rounds, we have acquired a good view of each others' positions and expectations.

Given that the new Agreement is to cover all the aspects of our relationship - ranging from trade and energy to external relations, from visa questions and fight against terrorism to education and culture, one needs to be realistic and expect the negotiations to take some time and that we progress faster on some issues than on others.

**Q. *Will the Lisbon Treaty bring some changes in EU-Russia relations?***

A. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty will bring greater coherence to the EU's external action and greater continuity. Whether this will lead to fresh momentum in EU-Russia relations will depend on the political will on both sides to move our relations forward.

I would like to say that Russia had a very positive attitude towards the Lisbon Treaty from the very beginning. As a strategic partner of the EU, Russia will no doubt be among the main beneficiaries of the improvements that the Lisbon Treaty brings. I am happy also that this change coincides with a clear improvement in the atmosphere of our relations, which I think results from a very pragmatic, business-like approach on both sides and among the many actors involved.