



**COUNCIL OF
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17th EU-Russia Summit, Sotchi, 25th May 2006

The leaders of the EU and Russia met today in Sotchi in Russia for the seventeenth EU-Russia summit. The friendly and open meeting focused on the practical implementation of the Road Maps for the Four Common Spaces as agreed at the previous EU-Russia Summit on 10 May 2005.

The leaders welcomed the ongoing work on the Common Economic Space (CES) which has the overall objective of bringing down barriers to trade and investment and promoting reforms and competitiveness, based on the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and good governance.

The leaders underlined the strategic importance of co-operation on energy and the need to enhance EU-Russia energy relations. The EU side stressed the importance of reciprocity in terms of access to markets, infrastructure and investment. The leaders welcomed progress concerning Russia's WTO accession as a factor in establishing these core principles. Close attention was paid to the issue of climate change and questions of EU-Russia cooperation in the field of joint implementation.

P R E S S

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In the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice the leaders welcomed the signature of agreements on visa facilitation and on readmission, which took place in the margins of the summit. The two agreements will open the way for easier contacts across the European continent, while creating conditions for effectively fighting illegal immigration. The particular importance of the ongoing cooperation to tackle common challenges for both the EU and Russia, like terrorism, drugs and organised crime, and the need to improve border management and migration control was underscored. The leaders also noted the results of the third round of EU-Russia Human Rights Consultations held in Vienna on 3 March 2006, and looked forward to the next regular round during the Finnish EU Presidency.

In the Common Space of External Security, the leaders reviewed co-operation on the international scene, including on countries in the common neighbourhood (Belarus, Moldova, South Caucasus). The EU side expressed hope for a breakthrough in Nagorny-Karabakh. They also welcomed recent steps to intensify practical co-operation in crisis management and stressed the need to strengthen multilateral non-proliferation mechanisms.

The leaders took note of progress in the Common Space on Research, Education and Culture, in particular the new impetus given to the Science and Technology Agreement and the start of the commonly funded European Institute in Moscow which will welcome first students this autumn.

The leaders discussed the future EU-Russia relations after the expiry of the first period of validity of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) in 2007. They looked forward to the start of negotiations for a new agreement which should provide a comprehensive and durable framework for the EU-Russia strategic partnership and agreed to allow the PCA remain valid until a new agreement enters into force.

Both sides addressed, in a constructive spirit, internal developments in the EU and Russia, including the situation in Chechnya. They welcomed the agreement on the terms of the European Commission's € 20 Mio programme for assistance to socio-economic recovery in the North Caucasus as a further sign of EU willingness to cooperate in this region.

They also discussed a wide range of international issues of strategic importance, including Iran, the Balkans and the Middle East Peace Process.

The seventeenth EU-Russia summit was hosted by Mr. Vladimir PUTIN, President of the Russian Federation, accompanied by Mr. Michail FRADKOW, Prime Minister, Mr. German GREF, Minister for Economic Development and Trade, Mr. Viktor KHRISTENKO, Minister for Energy and Industry, Mr. Igor LEVITIN, Minister of Transport as well as Mr. Viktor IVANOW, Assistant to the President, and Mr. Sergey YASTRZHEMBSKIY, Special Representative for development and relations with the European Union.

The European Union was represented by Mr. Wolfgang SCHÜSSEL, Federal Chancellor of Austria, in his capacity as President of the European Council, assisted by the Secretary General/High Representative, Javier SOLANA, and the President of the European Commission, Mr. Jose Manuel BARROSO, and accompanied by Mr. Hubert GORBACH, Vice-Chancellor of Austria. The President of the European Commission was accompanied by Mrs. Benita FERRERO-WALDNER, Commissioner for External Relations, and Mr. Peter MANDELSON, Commissioner for Trade.
