

THE BALTIC FORUM'S 12TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**THE EU AND RUSSIA IN 2007:
NEGOTIATING A NEW RELATIONSHIP**

25 – 26 May, 2007
Maritim Park Hotel, 1 Slokas str., Riga

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I am delighted to be here and particularly when I see that there is so much agreement already in our assessments. And I must say that in very general terms I agree with every one of the previous speakers. My vantage point is from Latvia, from the European side. And I am particularly glad to hear that the basic assessment of Mrs Arbatova very much corresponds to mine. There are details over which, I would say, I would use different terminology, the first one being that I do not see that the EU - Russia relations are currently in a crisis. Yes, these disagreements exist. There is no doubt about that. But I see this current situation as being one of healthy disagreement. Healthy from the point of view that we are talking openly about issues. Remember: when these agreements were made, when the EU made the agreements with Russia, there was such emphasis on a very lovely, very idealistic phraseology. Everything that's going to happen in the clouds and then the clouds with silver lining for every one, and lots of sunshine and happiness for everybody. Well, this was hardly realistic. Also the St. Petersburg agreements. They came about because the PCA, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1997, which started to be drafted in 1994, had become outdated. We know that. And therefore the agreement on the four common spaces was achieved, and that was very idealistic. The previous speakers have pointed out, and I thoroughly agree with that, that the current PCA is outdated. We need something new. We need something that is functional. We need something that has a vision toward the future, the future as we see it now, 10 years later. There is a difference. The EU has now practically doubled its membership. The most recent summit the EU and Russia summit in Samara showed this very, very well. And it also showed something about the EU, which was not quite sure, but it is certainly developing. This is a trend, that the EU is developing as an organization. It is coming together as an organization. It is treating the issues of the member states as the EU issues and seeking agreement first among the EU countries themselves and then going abroad, and then seeking agreement as an organization versus a big country which is very important for all of Europe, for all of the world, indeed. Here again we have to recognize something that we also are very much aware of, but, never the less, I would like to stress it. It is an obvious point, and the point is that the EU is an organization of states, whereas the Russian Federation is a country. And this already puts very important differences in the approach of how policies are drafted, in the way that each side reacts to different situations. This is all the more reason why I believe very firmly in an agreement, a framework agreement, which the previous speaker opted for, and I perfectly agree with him. This is all the more reason why we need such an agreement. Why we should definitely put aside detailed arguments over the detailed aspects to specific commissions, to expert groups, so as to come up with an agreement that is a series of agreements with added, additional accords on specific issues to be worked out by the experts, so the results are mutually satisfactory, mutually beneficial. At the same time, I feel that having come to the more realistic assessment of the EU on the part of the EU and the EU vis-à-vis its neighbors, I think that this will help come up with an altogether better agreement, because without realism we can not really go on. We know that. I have also been a proponent of using what has been achieved in the past. And one of them, and I feel that this has been very a good one, is this. Mr Putin, when he started, when we became Russia's prime minister, he presented the Russian Federation strategy on the EU. This is still in effect. And if we re-read it now, we see that those points of agreement still exist, I think. If we reread the EU response to it, and this was adopted when the EU membership consisted of only 15 countries, not the countries that once were affiliated in the Soviet bloc. Seen from one of the countries that were incorporated

in to the Soviet Union, I can look at that agreement and say there are so many points which we as Latvians could find that we hardly concur with. We know that the old member states agreed upon those points. I would say – let us reassess these points. Because, I think, particularly from the EU side, it would be beneficial for the Union to have a common foreign policy on the major powers of the world, and in that respect, clearly Russia. So, this would be very briefly, not to go back to what of other people have said, but this would be my current assessment of the situation. We need to go forward. We will not achieve a new agreement very quickly. The current situation in Russia, the current rhetoric and response from the EU side somehow brings back memories of the end of another political era, meaning that of president Yeltsin, when also political rhetoric became much hotter. If we consider the possibility that the Putin era maybe coming to a concluding point, at least this part of it, then this would seem rather an experience that we have lived through, an experience that we go beyond so as to continue to develop a future that is pragmatically beneficial for both sides, for both the EU and for Russia. At the same time, I do not see pragmatism as an essential element that precludes giving up those ideas, those values, that one cherishes the most. Thank you.