

**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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"Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to participate in the conference devoted to EU-Russia relations between so many famous experts and officials. As I suppose I am the only Pole on this floor, so I would like to welcome all of you, particularly the Latvian hosts from Baltic Forum, and pass on greetings from Warsaw. I don't represent the Polish government, but an independent think-tank, but I am sure that the government also subscribes to these greetings.

The recent EU – Russia summit showed many aspects and problems, which seems to be hard to solve. I hope that most of them will be discussed during this conference and with good will of our participants we will find some hope for the future. The current situation in and between the EU and Russia is still very difficult and unpredictable. Two partners look at each other and do not know what will be after 15 or 20 years. They concentrate on current situation without a long-term perspective. That is why the EU- Russia relations are dominated by bargain philosophy and a zero-one logic focused on short – term profits, as professor Abram Kleckin noticed before. In this context, the perspectives for the nearest future do not look positively. Without a long-term perspective on the EU – Russia relations, every little problem, like the Russian ban on Polish meat imports and, consequently the Polish veto on the EU–Russia negotiations on a new PCA will be growing up enormously. So, what should be the long-term perspective for the EU and Russia? In my view, this perspective is a real strategic partnership based on common principles and values like democracy rule of law, pluralism and human rights etc., shared by two partners. And there is no place for double standards. And in this context I totally agree with Mrs. Frabrizio Tassinari. This is the main thesis of my speech. The EU should promote democratic values in Russia more effectively, because it is not true that democracy, human rights and rule of law are impossible in Russia. This country has a long and beautiful tradition, Decembrists in the 19.century, Soviet dissidents in 20.century, and as a full member of the European civilization Russia is worthy to be a fully democratic country and in this context, I totally agree with Dmitry Medvedev, who said in an interview that he doesn't believe in sovereign democracy or its equivalents. Democracy in just democracy. Of course, the attitude of the Russian society to our democracy is defined by negative connotations associated with beginning of transformation in the 90-ies. The majority of Russians do not have a clear opinion whether their state is already democratic or not. According by research conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in March 2005, about one in three Russians is convinced that in Russia there is democracy, a similar number of people don't agree with this statement and the others do not have an opinion. But, according to the same survey, the largest number of Russian people associate democratization of their country with the rule of Vladimir Putin. In the other words, democratization is associated with periods of economic growth and relative prosperity. Russians value democracy and are attached to it in same way despite the lack of much experience and constant problems with this form of government. For more than half of Russiands it is important that Russia is trying to be a democratic state. And only one in five persons state that it is not important to them. Supporting democracy in Russia is an exceptionally difficult task that can be received with hostility and lack of understanding by the majority of population. The organization what is responsible for the promotion of democracy by the EU is the recently formed European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. But the amount of funds allocated to the Initiative's microprojects in Russia in 2006 is not considerably different from that spent on much more smaller states such as Georgia and

Kazakhstan, about 1 or 1.5 million euros. This means that promotion of democracy is still not under special consideration of the EU, even if the state of democracy in the other countries in the region to a large extent is dependent on the state of democracy in the Russia. Many politicians, independent experts and NGO representatives have emphasized that the EU should be more active in promotion of democracy. Some of them, such as the German politician Markus Meckel suggested to establish a European Foundation for Democracy, others postulate the creation of a similar foundation under the control of the EU Parliament. These initiatives deserve attention since they follow to general trend of making the EU more committed to and more effective in the promotion of democracy in the world. For further reform of the Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights it is important to eliminate bureaucratic practices to the fullest possible extent. The democracy promotion activities should be decentralized and led by people who work in that field and who know the specifics of the country. Secondly, it is necessary to simplify and de-bureaucratizes the procedures of granting funds and financial reporting.

So, finally, let me give some practical recommendations and conclusions. First, the EU can be attractive for Russia as a civilizational choice, even without membership prospects. It is possible that the Russian elites will choose a Western Europe model of democracy in the future, yet it is important for the EU member states to do everything to make this task easier for them. Democratization of Russia means supporting the activities of nongovernmental organizations working on government, minority rights, freedom of expression etc. The EU should approach these tasks in a very serious way. It is important to support the existing instruments of democracy promotion and not just focus on creating new instruments. The reform of Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights in order to make it more efficient should be continued. The funds allocated for Russia should be relatively bigger than those for the other countries in the region. It is vital to decentralize the initiative by ensuring a greater role for the EU delegation in Moscow in defining the initiatives for the Russia. The EU delegation in Moscow should intensify its activity, increasing the number of staff and its funds. Moreover, the delegation should not limit its activity to the capital, but be active also in the regions. The EU delegation should become an active center coordinating and supporting other institutions, acting in support the democracy in the Russia.

The first session of this conference concentrates to the principle of the future relations and the second one shares the energy issue. So, it's seems to be very optimistic that the values are more important that the business. Thank you for attention".