

Dmitry Medvedev's news conference following his visits to Papua New Guinea and Vietnam

The Prime Minister answered questions from the Russian media.

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Excerpts from the transcript:

Question: You have said during the talks with the Prime Minister of Vietnam that the atmosphere in Hanoi was better than at the APEC Economic Leaders' Week in Papua New Guinea, which made me think of the following question. The participants of the meeting in Papua New Guinea have not signed a final declaration, for the first time in the past 25 years. Could you not agree on the wording or on the essence of the document? Can the WTO be reformed if its main members cannot agree on the wording? Whose side did Russia take in this dispute?

Dmitry Medvedev: I do not want to offend our friends from Papua New Guinea. They did their utmost to prepare their country, which is not among the best developed country in the world, for this event. We really appreciate this, but speaking about the outcome of the top-level APEC meeting is much more difficult. For the first time since the organisation's inception, we could not coordinate a declaration. You want to know why? The reason for this is what you have asked about: difficulties in international trade, the very same trade wars that are being waged in the world, as well as the discussion that was held both on the sidelines of the APEC meeting and at the negotiating table. Unfortunately, that discussion prevented us from adopting a final document.

This document is important as the declaration of the sides' intentions to reform the international trade system without damaging the advantages offered by the WTO. The worst part is not that we have not coordinated a final declaration, but that this is what I was talking about, to a degree, during the business part of the summit. Regrettably, the international trade system has been put in jeopardy by some countries' decisions. Speaking bluntly, the problem is rooted in the decisions taken by one of our partners, the United States. Everything looks rather difficult now.

Of course, we are ready to hold talks on this subject. If we look at the situation directly and honestly, what will we see? If we cannot coordinate a declaration, how can we reform the WTO? It comprises a huge amount of standards, rules and principles, as well as practical actions regarding some problems. One complaint about the WTO is that its dispute settlement process,

or arbitration, is imperfect and that we need to improve it. But how can we reform whole institutions if we cannot even agree on a declaration? In this sense, the outcome of the APEC summit does look unconvincing, to put it very mildly.

You have asked which side Russia took. We have taken our side, the side of Russia's national interests, national economy and, ultimately, the citizens. However, some views are more congenial to us. You know which views these are. Of course, it would be more agreeable if we could preserve the main WTO advantages and its framework while reforming its dispute settlement process. The majority of states, though not everyone, share this view. But some countries, in particular, our American partners, say that everything is fine and they do not think any changes are needed. I believe it is a misguided view. But we will see what happens next.

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