

# Russia-Belgium talks

Dmitry Medvedev held talks with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium Charles Michel.

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**Excerpts from the transcript:**

Talks with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium Charles Michel

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Mr Prime Minister, welcome to the Moscow Region. It has been quite a while since our last meeting. The last time I [visited the Kingdom of Belgium was in 2010](#), and the last visit by a Belgian Prime Minister took place in 2011, which was quite a long time ago.

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## On 2 February, Dmitry Medvedev will chair a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Almaty and take part in the Digital Agenda in the Globalisation Era forum

The heads of government from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia will attend a regular meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, which will convene in Almaty on 2 February. The meeting will be chaired by Dmitry Medvedev.

The heads of government from the EAEU states will discuss current development issues and ways to improve the EAEU legal framework.

In particular, the Agreement on the Marking of Goods with Identification Means in the EAEU is being prepared for signing. The heads of government will also approve the Regulations on the Drafting, Financing and Implementation of Interstate Programmes and Projects in Industry.

Their agenda also includes specific matters related to competition rules on the cross-border market, pensions in the member states and cooperation in the

agricultural sector. The participants also plan to discuss the macroeconomic situation in their countries and mutual trade.

Dmitry Medvedev will also take part in the Digital Agenda in the Globalisation Era international forum and will speak at its plenary meeting. The forum will be attended by his EAEU colleagues and international experts, as well as the heads of government agencies from Kazakhstan and local and international journalists.

The forum aims to promote the EAEU's positions in digital globalisation and partnership among the EAEU member states. Discussions at the forum will focus on the integration of the EAEU countries' information systems.

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## [To the participants and guests of the Yellow Stars concert in memory of Holocaust victims and dedicated to the 73rd anniversary of liberating the Auschwitz \(Oswiecim\) concentration camp by the Red Army](#)

The Yellow Stars memorial event takes place in Moscow on 22 January.

Dear veterans and friends,

27 January will mark the 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of liberating Auschwitz, and International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Today you have come to this memorial concert to pay tribute to the memory of those who were killed by the Nazis, went through the inferno of the concentration camps or died during World War II.

Holocaust is not only the Jewish people's tragedy but an enduring pain of all humankind, which cannot be healed and which must never be forgotten. It is one of Nazism's gravest crimes, and six million innocent people fell victim to it. The work carried out by Jewish public organisations in order to preserve the truth of those terrible pages of history deserve our deepest respect.

Today, maybe more than ever before, it is crucial to tell this truth to the people who have never known war. They must understand the threat to the present-day world from anti-Semitism, xenophobia and incitement to national enmity and hatred. Sadly, we are witnessing new tragedies resulting from extremism and terrorism. They are based on the same misanthropic ideology and

are no less dangerous than Nazism.

Major of the Soviet Army Anatoly Shapiro, who was one of those who liberated Aushwitz-Birkenau, said, "I want to tell people all over the world: join efforts and prevent the evil which we suffered. People, preserve life on Earth!"

Decades later, we continue to view the Holocaust as a global catastrophe. This is why today it is so important to oppose those who try to present murderers and butchers as heroes.

We know and preserve the truth about the victims of Nazism and their liberators. We remember their heroic deeds. We will do everything to prevent time from making people indifferent to tragedies of the past. Only in this way can we prevent their repetition. It is our mission to defend peace and freedom. All of us together bear this responsibility towards future generations.

I wish to all of you who came to this memorial event peace, welfare and all the best.

Dmitry Medvedev

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## Organic food production

Excerpts from Dmitry Medvedev's opening remarks at a Government meeting

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Today we will be mostly discussing draft laws. Let us begin with the federal law On the Production of Organic Foods.

Organics has become a popular subject in the past few years. Many people are concerned about their health and try to eat healthy foods. They buy chemical-free vegetables and fruit and the meat of animals and poultry that have been raised on organic feed without antibiotics or growth hormones.

The global market of organic foods is growing in leaps and bounds, which makes organic farming one of the most promising agricultural businesses. According to experts, Russia can come to occupy between 10 and 25 percent of this market, up to a quarter of the market.

We have vast tracts of farmland. Some of them have been lying unused for a long time – we held a meeting on this issue yesterday – which is both a problem, because we need to devise a way to use this land, and a natural advantage, because they are free of chemicals. Our task is to use this land effectively and to encourage the farmers who are willing to do this.

Russia's organic foods market can be described as mostly unsystematic, although we do have some national standards. The adoption of this law will

create a clear legal framework for developing this segment of agriculture.

The draft law sets out the basic notions and definitions of organic foods, as well as production principles and the competencies of the federal authorities and local governments in this field.

By the way, you can see the term “organic” on foods that are not at all organic. People cannot understand how such products differ from those that are labelled “bio,” “eco,” “agro” or “natural.” The adoption of this law will prevent misinformation of consumers and protect their rights. We will approve standards for the use of organic labels, which will be placed only on foods bearing a compliance certificate. Those who violate these requirements will be held administratively liable.

Producers will be able to request certification of their production methods. We will create a unified state register of such producers, which will be open to the public. Such producers will also be able to receive government support.

Of course, all kinds of foods should remain available in stores following the adoption of this law, including both conventional and organic foods.

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## [Creation of Ladoga Skerries National Park \(the Republic of Karelia\)](#)

The Ladoga Skerries National Park, with a total area of 122,000 hectares, will be developed in the Lakhdempokhsky, Sortavalsky and Pitkyarantsky municipal districts of the Republic of Karelia on the northern and northwestern coasts of Ladoga Lake. The reason for creating the park is to preserve the unique natural complexes of the Ladoga Lake skerries that have no analogue in Russia and Europe. The decision will form a legal framework for providing a system of special protection for natural complexes and facilities within the national park’s boundaries.

### **Reference**

The Russian Natural Resources and Environment Ministry introduced the measure in line with the federal law On Specially Protected Natural Areas.

The establishment of the Ladoga Skerries National Park (later referred to as the ‘national park’) has been envisaged by the plan for the implementation of the Concept for the Development of Federal Specially Protected Natural Areas until 2020 (approved by the Government’s directive of 22 December 2011 No 2322-r) and the plan for conducting the Year of the Environment in Russia in

2017 (approved under the Government's directive of 2 June 2016 No 1082-r).

The signed resolution approves the establishment of the Ladoga Skerries National Park, with a total area of 122,000 hectares, in the Lakhdenpokhsky, Sortavalsky and Pitkyarantsky municipal districts of the Republic of Karelia on the northern and northwestern coasts of Ladoga Lake.

The reason for creating the park is to preserve Ladoga Lake's unique natural complexes of skerries which have no parallel in Russia or Europe and to maintain biodiversity represented by numerous vascular and non-vascular plants, lichens, seaweeds, mushrooms and softwood of natural origin that have survived in conditions of increasing human impact. The special system of protection for the national park's premises will help preserve a rare endemic animal species, the Ladoga ringed seal, listed in the Red Data Book of Russia and the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The projected national park will include 63 of the Republic of Karelia's cultural landmarks, including those of federal importance – camps, burial grounds, ancient settlement sites (dating back to the period between 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> millenniums BC and 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the historic centre of Sortavala town with wooden and stone structures from the 19<sup>th</sup>-first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Unique landscapes and relict plant communities together with historic and cultural sights attract tourists, which will boost educational and ecotourism both in the national park and in the Republic of Karelia.

The results of the comprehensive environmental inspection of the premises validating the attribution of the legal status of a national park to the territory have undergone public discussion and obtained positive reviews from state environmental experts.

The decision will form a legal framework for provision of a special protective regime, effective for natural complexes and facilities within the national park's boundaries.