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

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News conference by Dmitry Medvedev and Charles Michel following talks

Excerpts from the transcript:

Charles Michel (via interpreter): Good afternoon,

I had an opportunity to hold a working meeting with Prime Minister Medvedev today. He came with a delegation, including, in particular, the Minister of Economic Development.

We discussed Belgium-Russia relations. We met in Russia in January to discuss opportunities in investment and economic activities in order to expand our cooperation. Many Belgian companies interact with their Russian partners. Some of them have been in business for a long time now and are successfully operating, developing the infrastructure, engaging in the mining business and working in the chemical industry. So, the relations between our countries have a long track record, and we must do our best to give a new impetus to bilateral trade.

We also had an opportunity to review international affairs and geopolitical issues. Belgium will become a non-permanent member of the Security Council in January 2019, and we will thus be able to work closely in this organisation with all its members, including Russia. We agreed that we will hold regular consultations. In particular, our delegation will visit Russia in the near future to discuss cooperation in the Security Council and interaction with

our various partners.

We also discussed the future of relations between the European Union and Russia. We are fully aware of the fact that a number of issues have caused disagreements between the European Union and Russia over the past few years, and my colleague and I discussed these issues. Acting in line with the Harmel Doctrine, Belgium is trying to find points of contact in order to prevent the escalation of current processes.

Other subjects were covered during the working meeting as well.

Mr Prime Minister, I am very pleased that we were able to openly share our points of view. Everyone has to protect their vision and values. Human rights and the rule of law are the most important values for Europeans. You can count on us as we will always be candid and open in our desire to continue a dialogue and cooperation in various areas, bilateral or multilateral, when we work with you, in particular, on international platforms.

Dmitry Medvedev: Thank you very much.

Mr Prime Minister, media members,

I find it difficult to add anything to what my colleague just said. Indeed, we went over the entire range of economic cooperation between our countries and political interaction, both in the bilateral format and in terms of Russia-EU relations. We pinpointed all the difficulties, all the missed opportunities. Most notably, we discussed our future plans.

Like Belgium, Russia is open to this kind of interaction. I am very pleased that our dialogue, which began in January, quickly found a continuation here, in Belgium. On one hand, I am here because of the ASEM Summit; on the other, I received an invitation to visit Belgium, for which I thank the Prime Minister.

Indeed, we had a very productive dialogue in a friendly atmosphere. We exchanged views on a wide range of bilateral, multilateral, economic, political and security issues.

We welcome the fact that Belgium will soon become a non-permanent Security Council member. This will give us an opportunity to communicate in the UN Security Council as well. We believe that the UN remains the only universal international institution that can take up and resolve issues, because other institutions do not include all international community members. We appreciate Belgium's contribution to promoting relations with all countries (including ours) and its attempts to find solutions to challenges on the international agenda and in bilateral relations.

We have discussed a number of specific matters. If you have questions, go ahead and ask them now.

Question (via interpreter): Belgian Radio and Television.

Mr Medvedev, when our Prime Minister visited Moscow a few months ago, you

said that Belgium could play an important role in restoring relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union. However, a lot has happened since that time, including the Skripal poisoning and a cyber-attack attempt in the Hague. Do you think that normal relations can still be restored, and that Belgium is also ready to pursue this?

Dmitry Medvedev: First, I believe this question should be addressed to my Belgian colleague, not me.

Second, a lot of things happen in the world. They should not necessarily affect our relations.

I can give you examples of things that happen in the world but that do not interfere with our relations.

If our partners are willing to help Russia restore and develop its ties with the European Union, we would only appreciate it. Especially, since we think our relations are going through a rough patch, and we have lost a lot in recent years. I have repeatedly spoken of this. We have lost half of our trade volume, and this trade has been transferred to other countries. In the process of restoring our contacts in different areas, including the economy and political cooperation (which is of great significance, and this ASEM summit shows this), an important role belongs to those countries who would like to participate. And our partners in Belgium have expressed their interest in this.

To be continued...