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### **Post-release on the Briefing by Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for the AEB representatives**

On October 5, 2020, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with representatives of the Association of European Businesses (AEB) during the online briefing, which took place at the Foreign Ministry's Press Centre.

The event was broadcast live on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru).

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that he highly appreciates the depoliticized and pragmatic dialogue with the AEB members and expects to continue regular meetings, which have already become a good tradition. "In our Ministry, we appreciate the dialogue with European entrepreneurs, a dialogue that aims to promote a pragmatic, depoliticized, mutually beneficial agenda, aimed ultimately at improving the welfare of citizens of Russia and your countries, – said Mr. Lavrov.

At the same time, the Minister noted that the international situation has a negative impact on business activity. In particular, he emphasized the destructive role of coronavirus in the world economy, "which will have a long and certainly difficult period of recovery".

A significant part of the Minister's speech was devoted to the most acute problems of international relations, such as politicization of trade and economic cooperation, interference in the internal affairs of states, trade wars, threats to global energy security and others.

Johan Vanderplaetse, Chairman of the AEB Board, in his turn, noted that the recent complications in the relations between the EU and Russia could not have come at a worse time. The geopolitical tensions have a very negative impact on business, which already has to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. The AEB therefore expressed its hope for the soonest restoration of a constructive dialogue between all parties.

In addition, the Chairman of the AEB Board thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its support in dealing with issues related to foreign highly qualified specialists (HQS).

– Nevertheless, — added Johan Vanderplaetse, – the procedure for obtaining a travel permit is still very complicated and European businesses need some support to facilitate the entry/exit process for its employees and their families to Russia. Another problem mentioned by the AEB Board Chairman is the unresolved Baring Vostok case, which "still hangs a shadow over all of us".

The Foreign Minister acknowledged the need for cooperation on the issues mentioned, but stressed that good will should not be unilateral and called on his EU colleagues to focus on the constructive direction of bilateral relations.

At the end of the briefing, participants had the opportunity to ask questions to Mr. Lavrov.

AEB CEO Tazio Schilling moderated the Q&A session. He thanked the Minister for the opportunity given to European businesses to openly discuss possible ways out of the existing crisis and noted that one of the main tasks of the AEB is to develop an active dialogue between foreign investors and the government officials.

Representatives of AEB member companies received answers to their most urgent questions directly from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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