



Association
of European
Businesses

Post-event press release

Moscow, March 31, 2015

The VI Northern Dimension Forum comes to an end

The VI Northern Dimension Forum was held on March 26, 2015 in St. Petersburg. The event was attended by 250 delegates.

The main purpose of the forum was to boost ties between representatives of government, business and civil society on the territory of the Northern Dimension member States.

This year the organizers of the Forum — The Northern Dimension Business Council (NDBC) and the Association of European Businesses (AEB) — chose the main topic of discussion as inter-regional cross-border cooperation in the changed reality. At the forum participants tried to develop new approaches to business development and interaction at the level of civil society.

The forum saw presentations by senior representatives of Russian and European ministries and departments, as well as heads of large companies, including: Vladimir Bulavin, Plenipotentiary Presidential Representative in the North-Western Federal District; Vladimir Goshin, Member of the Board (Minister) for Customs Cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Commission; Georgy Poltavchenko, Governor of St. Petersburg; Paavo Lipponen, Prime Minister of Finland 1995—2003; Sven-Olov Carlsson, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Russia; Ivan Soltanovsky, Head of the Department for European Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; Mikael Aro, President and CEO of VR-Group, Representative of the co-chairman of the NDBC.

At the forum round table meetings were held on: electricity and energy efficiency, ecology and cleantech, vocational education, transport and logistics, health and pharmaceuticals, creative industries.

Alexei Mordashov, CEO of Severstal-management and co-chairman of the NDBC:

“Over the years the Northern Dimension forum has demonstrated its appeal to business.

The VI Northern Dimension Forum is being held in new, quite difficult economic conditions with deteriorating political ties. For this reason the forum now has particular appeal as a platform for dialogue and discussion of strategies for further action. Over the past year there have been major economic changes. In 2015 the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) came into force. Now this union is developing and growing stronger. Already most of the powers have been transferred by the state to the level of the union: foreign trade, technical regulations, customs clearance. All this is very important and affects the business of all of us.

Today more than ever it is important to maintain dialogue at different levels. At the time when political dialogue is not developing, ties between business and civil society are important. We should not dwell on our problems. The most important thing is to take appropriate and required steps to move forward.”

Mikael Aro, President and CEO of VR-Group and Representative of the co-chairman of the NDBC:

“The world is different compared to it used to be two years ago, when I last time visited Northern Dimension Forum here in St. Petersburg. For the global competitiveness of our Northern Dimension area the time is challenging. Now we need – maybe even more than ever – cooperation. The purpose of the Northern Dimension remains as creating stability, prosperity and support the conditions for economic development in the area.

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In the investment climate there is always room for improvement in cross-border international context, as well as in national and regional levels. That's why the forum like Northern Dimension is very useful both for business representative as well as for authorities. Dialogue is what we need for improving the investment climate – we need continuous dialogue between business representatives and authorities in order to make sure that the global competitiveness of our Northern Dimension area will not lose in international competition”.

Philippe Pegorier, Chairman of the AEB Board:

“The north-western regions play a strategic role in relations between the EU and Russia. This is especially important in the current difficult times, with the lack of dialogue and the closure of official lines of discussion. Most of the Nordic countries are actively promoting economic sanctions against Russia as a solution to the Ukrainian crisis. The AEB does not support such an approach. European business like anyone else has something to lose. We could lose more than a million jobs in the EU and half a million jobs in Russia.

The Northern Dimension forum is now one of the few platforms for dialogue between the EU, Norway, Iceland and Russia. I am glad that such communication lines remain open. The forum should serve as an example of cross-border cooperation in the new conditions. Today we undoubtedly live in a new reality, and business is learning to adapt to the new rules of the game, such as localization and import substitution.”

The forum organizers have set the date of the VII Northern Dimension Forum: it will be on April 7, 2016 in St. Petersburg.

For more information, please contact the press secretary Svetlana Kuskova by email at: svetlana.kuskova@aebrus.ru or by phone at: +7 (495) 234 27 64 ext. 136.



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About the Northern Dimension Business Council (NDBC)

The initiative of creating NDBC and its concept was approved at the Northern Dimension Senior officials' meeting in Stockholm on November 12, 2009. The co-chairmen of the NDBC have been since its establishment Tapio Kuula, President and CEO of Fortum Corporation (Finland) from the European side and Alexey Mordashov, CEO of Severstal-management from the Russian side.

The fundamental idea of NDBC is that the competitiveness of any region in the world is based on trust between government and business; with a clear division of tasks, rights and responsibilities between business and government.

Activities of the NDBC contribute to the Russia-EU modernization partnership; encourage investments in priority sectors such as medicine and biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, energy efficiency, nanotechnology, information technology, microelectronics, mechanical engineering, ecology, technology of production and transportation of mineral resources; develop the bilateral dialogue to improve trade policies.

The practical work of the NDBC is carried out in working groups, which all have co-chairmen representing European and Russian companies.

About the Association of European Businesses (AEB)

Founded in 1995, the Association of European Businesses (AEB) is an independent non-profit organization representing over 600 companies from Europe and Russia. Our members range from large multi-national corporations to SMEs. They are united by their commitment to forging stronger economic ties between the EU and Russia as well as improving the investment climate in Russia.

The AEB conducts lobbying activities through 40+ committees and working groups, representing various industries and sectors, including Energy, Customs & Transport, Airlines, Legal, Taxation, Banking, Real Estate, Crop protection etc. The AEB has also two regional branches in Saint Petersburg and Krasnodar.

The committees work closely with European and Russian authorities and submit amendments to draft laws.

The AEB also offers information support to the European business community through its website and publications, press campaigns, surveys, legislative and business alerts.

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