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PRESS RELEASE

AEB Event: Briefing by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov

On September 13th, 2010, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov met with members of the Association of European Businesses. In his briefing, Mr. Lavrov noted that his regular meetings with representatives of the European business community (this was their fourth meeting of this kind) serve as a good tradition in promoting a successful cooperation between the Russian Federation and the European Union (EU).

Talking about the process of overcoming the consequences of the global economic downturn, Mr. Lavrov noted that stabilization and gradual positive developments in the world economy were made possible by coordinated actions of the international community. The crisis helped everyone understand that security and successful development are inseparable and that no party could overcome the crisis at another party's expense. The strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the EU not only helps build our economies, but also provides answers to many global issues that the humankind faces.

Describing the positive developments in relations with the EU over the last two years, Mr. Lavrov made mention of the progress on the new basic agreement between the EU and Russia, initiated by the Russian side. The goal of the new agreement is to lay a firm legal foundation for cooperation over many years to come. Expediting the work on the agreement will help bring closer the ascension of Russia to the WTO, which is still on the agenda, despite the creation of the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Mr. Lavrov noted that economic priorities could be set only in conditions of equal responsibility. For instance, investment limitations (the so-called EU Third Energy Package) endanger Russian investments into the energy sector of EU countries.

Touching upon the issue of crucial importance for business, the visa-free travel between the Russian Federation and the EU, the Minister noted that the solution has been detained for much too long, even though the Russian Federation and the EU pose no migration threat to each other. There are no real reasons for keeping the visa regime for traveling between Russia and the EU. Russia has made several steps in this direction, having satisfied some of the EU wishes, and simplified the migration registration criteria for foreign travelers. In May, 2010, President Medvedev signed a Federal Law that simplifies administrative procedures for highly qualified professionals.

The Minister called upon the participants to provide a real meaning to the concept of the Greater Europe common space, helping bridge research and technological potential to respond to modern challenges and retain Europe's position in the globalized world. This is the goal of the "Partnership for Modernization Initiative", introduced at the summit in Rostov-on-Don. This program will determine the priorities in cooperation between the two sides in the near future. Comprehensive modernization of the country, innovative high technology development models, Mr. Lavrov said, presuppose involvement of a comprehensive range of outside modernization sources.

In conclusion, the Minister called upon the European business community to breathe life into this project, look "beyond the horizon", and use the opportunities constantly being presented. The business community will make a vital contribution to creating a unified, peaceful and prosperous Europe, and help

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the continent achieve its strategic and fundamental goals. Responding to the participants' questions, the Minister said that the Russian Federation, Europe and the USA represent three branches of the unified European civilization, and that this unity must be maintained and strengthened, since the competition between civilizations worldwide will only intensify.

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