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Post-release

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AEB 25+ ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

"RUSSIA AND EUROPE IN THE WORLD OF TOMORROW. LOOKING BACK TO MOVE AHEAD"

On April 22, 2021, the Association of European Businesses (AEB) held its 25+ Anniversary Online Conference "RUSSIA AND EUROPE IN THE WORLD OF TOMORROW. LOOKING BACK TO MOVE AHEAD" which took place on the online platform of Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO. The event opened the AEB jubilee activities of this year.

Economic ties between the European Union (EU) and Russia have flourished over the past 25 years despite all economic crisis and political stand-offs. European investors have been the first to believe in the potential of the Russian market and remained faithful to it even in difficult times.

However, the present does not look so bright, so the EU and Russian economies and societies are currently facing great challenges. As Johan Vanderplaetse, AEB Chairman of the Board, President, Russia & CIS / Senior Vice-President, General management, Schneider Electric, noted in his opening speech:

"Today, as the EU-Russia relations are going through great political tensions, the AEB remains one of the very few bridges that help connect the Eurasian continent together and remind of what the European Union and Russia have in common".

The current public health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-term repercussions on business models and supply chains while it is already clear that Moscow and Brussels will come out of it weakened, both in absolute terms and relative to other global political actors.

Therefore, the 1st session of the Conference, moderated by Tadzio Schilling, AEB CEO, was devoted to possibility of the synchronizing economic recovery in Europe.

Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, in his speech pointed out, that the Ministry and the AEB have a long-term and fruitful cooperation.

"We very much appreciate the interest of European business in our country and the work of the Association. You help to strengthen the Russian economy by attracting investment and creating new jobs. 2,000 completed projects, \$300 billion of investment over 25 years. This is a good result of the fruitful joint work. We also thank our colleagues from the AEB for active joint work on introduction of "golden visas" for foreign investors in Russia", - said the Minister.

Other speakers of the session also shared their ideas and experiences on this topic. Among them were: Esko Aho, Former Prime-Minister of Finland, Senior Advisor, East Office of Finnish Industries, Alexander Shokhin, President, RSP, Natalia Kolerova, President, Novartis Group Russia, Alexander Liberov, President & CEO, Siemens Russia, Stefan Mecha, General Director, Volkswagen Group Rus, and Eirik Waerness, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, Equinor.

European Union and Russia have much to gain from a revival of their relations. Maintaining and developing cooperation in fields such as environment, the Arctic or 5-G technologies between Moscow and Brussels could be one mechanism for getting out of the current lockdown and resetting bilateral relations.



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The next session was devoted to one of the most important and promising areas of possible cooperation: Energy Transformation Agenda, which was moderated by Ernesto Ferlenghi, Chairman of the Energy Committee of the Association of European Businesses (AEB).

"Climate change and environmental protection are our common challenges. For global issues we need global solutions. All parties - states, institutions, companies, social societies should contribute to carbon emission reduction and development of sustainable, green economy", - said Ernesto Ferlenghi.

Markus Ederer, Ambassador of the European Union to Russia, told the audience that despite the fact, that the EU-Russia relations are at the low point, the sides still have a chance to successfully cooperate in the field of sustainable development.

The future of the energy sector was also discussed by: Sergey Esyakov, First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Energy, Vladimir Ililichev, Deputy Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, Patrick Anthony, Chief Executive Officer, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Ingka Group in Russia, Johan Vanderplaetse, Chairman of the Executive Board, AEB, Senior Vice President, President Russia and CIS, Schneider Electric, David Campbell, President, BP Russia, Tatiana Mitrova, Professor, Academic Advisor, Center for Energy at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO, Leonid Fedun, Member of the Management Committee, Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Climate Policy and Carbon Regulation, Vice President, Member of the Board of Directors, LUKOIL and Alexander Chuvaev, Executive Vice President, General Director of PJSC Fortum.

Alexander Ivlev, Managing Partner, EY CIS, moderated the session about the possibility to a digitally divided world. As Alexander said, *"According to the EY Russia survey, Russia is third in the world in terms of the implementation of fin-tech services in general and the number one in terms of implementation for payments and money transfer services"*.

Among the participants of the session were: Vladimir Urbansky, Director of Digital Products, Pochta Rossii, Andrey Filatov, Managing Director, SAP CIS, Maxim Kuznetsov, Head of Philips in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia & the CIS, Senior Vice-President, Vasily Nomokonov, Member of the Board, Executive Director for Business Process Management, IT, Digital Technologies, Corporate Services, OOO Sibur and Kristina Tikhonova, President, Microsoft Russia.

And the last, but not the least, session was about the leaders of the future. Who will shape the world of tomorrow?

"There should be no obstacles to cooperation. I'm sure we need to change the agenda", stated Alexander Grushko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

The views on the goals of the future leaders expressed all the participants of the session: Alexey Kommissarov, Vice-Dean of RANEPА, Director of the Higher School of Public Administration (HSPA) at RANEPА, General Director of the ANO "Russia – the Land of Opportunities", Thierry de Montbrial, Executive Chairman of the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri) and Wolfgang Schussel, Former Federal Chancellor of Austria, Independent Member of the Board of Directors of PJSC LUKOIL, President of the Foreign Policy and United Nations Association of Austria (ÖAGVN) under moderation of Andrei Sharonov, President, Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO.

Summing up the results of the conference, Tadzio Schilling and Andrei Sharonov stated that despite all the difficulties, relations between Russia and the EU still have a future and potential, and business should become an instrument of positive change.



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