

Building Russian-US bonds despite

Russia - for relations - USA



By Dmitry A Medvedev

Both, US and Russia should agree that overcoming our common negative legacy is possible only by ensuring equality and mutual benefit

IT is hard to dispute the pessimistic assessments of the Russian-American relationship that prevailed at the end of last year. Unfortunately, relations soured because of the previous US administration's plans - specifically, deployment of the US global missile defence system in Eastern Europe, efforts to push NATO's borders eastward and refusal to ratify the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. All of these positions undermined Russia's interests and, if imple-

mented, would inevitably require a response on our part.

I believe that removing such obstacles to good relations would be beneficial to our countries - essentially removing "toxic assets" to make good a negative balance sheet - and beneficial to the world. This will require joint efforts. The exchange of letters between myself and President Obama this year showed mutual readiness to build mature bilateral relations in a pragmatic and businesslike manner. For that we have a "road map" - the Strategic Framework Declaration our countries signed in Sochi in 2008. It is essential that the positive ideas in that declaration be brought to life. We are ready for that.

Possible areas of cooperation abound. For instance, I agree with President Obama that resuming the disarmament process should become our immediate priority. The wish to ensure absolute security in a unilateral way is a dangerous illusion. I am encouraged that our new partners in Washington realise this. It also appears that we all understand the need to search for collective solutions to the problems facing Afghanistan, with the involvement of all influential players. In this spirit, Moscow hosted a broad-based conference on Afghanistan under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation. We welcome the US initiative to convene a United Nations conference in the Netherlands. It is critical that Russia and the United States view these conferences as mutually reinforcing rather than competitive.

Neither Russia nor the United States can tolerate drift and indifference in our

ests. I am ready for such work with President Obama on the basis of these principles, and I hope to begin as early as tomorrow at our first meeting in London before the Group of 20 summit. The state of the global economy is a great concern to all. We can ensure the sustainability of

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relations. I spoke in Washington last November about the need to put an end to the crisis of confidence. To begin with, we should agree that overcoming our common negative legacy is possible only by ensuring equality and mutual benefit and by taking into account our mutual inter-

the global financial system only by making its architecture mutually complementary and reliant on a diversified system of regional reserve currencies and financial centers. During the summit, Russia and the United States can help lead the effort to establish universal rules and disciplines

lingering mistrust

that would apply to all parties without exception. We should also think together of whether it might be expedient to introduce a world supranational reserve currency, potentially under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund. In bilateral relations, we need to see more successful investment projects, joint research and development by companies, and increased trade in high-tech products. The end of the Cold War and subsequent globalisation fundamentally altered the geopolitical context of our relations and vastly increased the importance of leadership. Today, effective leadership must be collective, based on the desire and ability to find common denominators for the interests of the international community and major groups of states. The G-20 summits are a major step toward this.

I am convinced that Russia and the United States can offer much to the world while maintaining our special responsibility in world affairs. These opportunities are most visible on the issues of strategic stability and nuclear security. The nature of the Russian-US relationship to a large extent determines transatlantic politics, which could use trilateral cooperation among the European Union, Russia and the United States as its pillar.

The need to restart our cooperation is prompted in part by the history of our relations, which includes a number of highly emotional moments - diplomatic support provided by Russia to the United States at critical points of America's development, our joint fight against fascism and the era of détente. In his inaugural address, President Obama explicitly expressed his understanding that the United States needed to change together with the rest of the world. His speech deeply impressed me with its unbiased assessment of America's problems. I agree that greatness is never a given. It must be earned.

Long ago, Alexis de Tocqueville predicted a great future for our two nations. So far, each country has tried to prove the truth of those words to itself and the world by acting on its own. I firmly believe that at this turn of history, we should work together. The world expects Russia and the United States to take energetic steps to establish a climate of trust and goodwill in global politics, not to languish in inaction and disengagement. We cannot fail to meet those expectations.

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