

Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

Vladimir Putin attended the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

April 26, 2019 06:30 Beijing

Vladimir Putin spoke at the opening ceremony of the forum business program.

The Belt and Road Forum takes place in Beijing on April 25 – 27.

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President of Russia Vladimir Putin:

President Xi Jinping, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank my good friend President of China Xi Jinping for inviting me to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to be here in such a large representative group and to meet with each other, to discuss current issues of global development and principles of cooperation.

I have listened with great interest –

as I am sure many other people in this hall have – about the principles and goals of China’ s development, that is, how the People’ s Republic of China, the world’ s largest economy today in terms of purchasing power parity, is planning to develop and build relationships with its partners.

This is of fundamental importance both for Russia and, I am sure, for many of our colleagues who have gathered here in Beijing today.

It is obvious that the implementation of this ambitious project, Belt and Road, promoted by our Chinese colleagues, is aimed at

strengthening the constructive cooperation of the Eurasian states.

Its truly unifying goal is to ensure harmonious and sustainable economic development and economic growth throughout the Eurasian space.

Russia has emphasised on numerous occasions that PRC President's Belt and Road initiative rimes with Russia's idea to establish a Greater Eurasian Partnership, a project designed to 'integrate integration frameworks', and therefore to promote a closer alignment of

various bilateral and multilateral integration processes that are currently underway in Eurasia.

Russia is ready to undertake efforts for creating a transparent and enabling environment in order to promote cooperation across Eurasia.

It is important that we come up with effective ways of responding to the risks of a fragmented global political, economic and technological landscape and growing protectionism, with illegitimate unilateral restrictions imposed bypassing the UN Security Council or, even worse, trade wars

as its most dangerous expressions.

It is our firm belief that only by working together can we counter urgent challenges such as decelerating economic growth, the deepening prosperity gap among nations as well as technological backwardness.

Let me repeat what I have said on numerous occasions: these negative trends feed terrorism, extremism and illegal migration flows, causing old regional conflicts to resurface and new ones to emerge.

I strongly believe that Eurasia can become a role model in devising a

meaningful and positive agenda for overcoming these and other urgent international problems.

Peoples of various cultures, religions and traditions have inhabited the vast Eurasian space for millennia.

Of course, there were wars and conflicts throughout the continent's history, but sooner or later they subsided, while common sense and the natural aspiration of the people to peace and communication always triumphed at the end of the day.

Russia is interested in the closest cooperation with all Eurasian

partners on the basis of unshakable principles of respect for the sovereignty, rights and legitimate interests of each state. It is on these principles that we are building the Eurasian Economic Union, with our partners – Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Soon, on May 29, the EAEU will have been in existence for five years. Over this period, a common market has been created, and conditions are being created to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour. Common markets have been formed, as well as a common digital space.

In his remarks just now, President Xi Jinping spoke about linking his initiatives with similar ones and with other associations that are forming in our vast space. This absolutely fits into our plans.

The EAEU states are actively working to strengthen industrial and technological cooperation, to build efficient transport and logistics chains.

And we, too, together with our Chinese friends, with all our partners, will talk more during our meetings today and tomorrow, we will continue coordinating this work, work of a global nature.

We also continue pursuing the policy of harmonising our monetary and fiscal policies.

At the same time, the Eurasian Economic Union strives for the widest possible cooperation with all interested countries and associations.

I am primarily referring to the People's Republic of China, the country we consider to be our key supporter, our natural partner in the integrated development of the continent.

The five EAEU member states have unanimously supported the idea of

pairing the EAEU development and the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt project. The agreements reached in this regard are being successfully implemented. In the coming months, the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the EAEU and China will enter into force.

The Eurasian Union is committed to liberalising economic ties with its other partners as well, and has already signed a free trade agreement with Vietnam and a provisional agreement with Iran paving the way to the creation of a free trade area. The preparation of

similar instruments with Singapore and Serbia is nearing completion, and talks are underway with Israel, Egypt and India.

We cooperate actively with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We undoubtedly stand for expanding business ties with the European Union, our long-standing and traditional partner, in a constructive and equitable manner. Even if there are currently some differences between us, they cannot and should not cast a shadow on our shared responsibility for the

future of Europe and all of Eurasia.

Let me emphasise that the Great Eurasian Partnership and Belt and Road concepts are both rooted in the principles and values that everyone understands: the natural aspiration of nations to live in peace and harmony, benefit from free access to the latest scientific achievements and innovative development, while preserving their culture and unique spiritual identity. In other words, we are united by our strategic, long-term interests.

I strongly believe that the comprehensive approach that underpins both concepts will help

us further enhance economic cooperation within the continent, develop shared transport and energy infrastructure and promote digital technology. This way, integration will serve the interests of our peoples and all Eurasian nations to the fullest extent.

Once again, I would like to thank our partners, our Chinese friends for this initiative. Thank you for your attention.

Thank you very much.

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60378>

News conference following

Russian-North Korean talks

Following his talks with Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong-un, Vladimir Putin answered media questions.

April 25, 2019 12:45
Russky Island, Vladivostok

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President of Russia Vladimir Putin:

Good afternoon,

I suggest that we go straight to questions and answers. I will try to answer your questions. Go ahead, please.

Question: Mr President, this was your first meeting with Kim Jong-un. There is significant interest towards him as a person around the world. Could you share with us your impressions about him as a person and a politician, and whether you are satisfied with the outcomes of the talks?

Vladimir Putin: Yes, my colleagues and I are all satisfied with the outcomes of the talks. Chairman Kim Jong-un is quite an open person and speaks freely. We had a very detailed conversation on all items on our agenda and discussed them in various aspects, including

bilateral relations, sanctions, United Nations, relations with the United States, and, of course, the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, which is the main subject. I can confirm that he is quite an interesting and substantive interlocutor.

Question: Mr President, coming out of these talks, what in your opinion are the real prospects for denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and for Pyongyang and Seoul to improve their relations? What needs to be done to achieve this? What steps need to be taken and what barriers will have to be

overcome? What prevents the parties from reaching common ground?

Vladimir Putin: The most important thing, as we have discussed today during the talks, is to restore the rule of international law and revert to the position where global developments were regulated by international law instead of the rule of force. If this happens, this would be the first and critical step toward resolving challenging situations such as the one on the Korean Peninsula.

So, what is denuclearisation all about? It implies North Korea's

disarmament to a certain extent. Naturally (I have noted this on numerous occasions and can confirm this once again), the North Korean side is also talking about this. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea needs guarantees of its security and sovereignty.

But what guarantees can there be, except those based on international law? We can think about international guarantees, and this would probably be correct. But these guarantees also lie in the sphere of international law. Therefore we will not invent anything new here.

How substantial will these guarantees be, and to what extent will they meet the interests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? It is still too early to talk about this today, but it is necessary to take the first steps towards strengthening trust. To my mind, this seems possible on the whole.

It was possible as far back as 2005, when the United States and North Korea signed the relevant treaty and agreement. For some reason, our American partners suddenly decided that the provisions stipulated and coordinated by the United States were not exhaustive,

and that it was necessary to add something else there. These aspects were included in the treaty, and North Korea immediately withdrew from it.

If we act like this, and if we take one step forward and two backwards, then we would fail to achieve the desired result. But it will eventually be possible to achieve this goal, if we move forward gradually and if we respect each other's interests (here I am talking about all the parties involved in resolving the North Korean problem or the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula), if we move ahead

carefully, and if we respect each other and each other' s interests.

Question: Could you please tell us if you are planning to inform Donald Trump of today' s meeting or discuss the results of the talks with your other colleagues, due to gather in Beijing tomorrow? To what extent do Russia' s and US efforts correlate on the Korean track, and do the interests of our countries regarding the situation around the Democratic People' s Republic of Korea coincide?

Vladimir Putin: They coincide in some respects.

Of course, I will certainly speak with the leadership of the People's Republic of China in Beijing tomorrow. But we will also discuss this matter and today's meeting with US leadership in the same open and candid manner. There are no secrets here; Russia always voices an open position, there are no conspiracies. Moreover, Chairman Kim Jong-un himself asked us to inform the US side about his position, about his questions arising in connection with processes on the Korean Peninsula and everything taking place around this. Therefore, I repeat, there are no secrets here. We will also discuss

this with the Americans and our Chinese friends.

Regarding your question as to whether our interests coincide with those of the United States on this issue, I can say that this is also true.

For example, we advocate complete denuclearisation: this is a fact.

Actually, we completely oppose the global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And that is why a considerable share of steps within the framework of the United Nations is being coordinated. True, we will not conceal the fact that the sides often wrangle over specific clauses while making the decisions,

and you know this well. But, naturally, we prioritise efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear conflicts; this is our common priority.

But I have the impression that the North Korean leader also shares this viewpoint. All they need is national security guarantees. Everyone must think about this together.

Question: During Kim Jong Il' s rule, Russia planned to build a gas pipeline to South Korea via North Korea and to upgrade railways in the Democratic People' s Republic of Korea. But many of these projects are in limbo because Pyongyang

now faces sanctions. Did you discuss these projects with Kim Jong-un? Is the Russian side interested in these projects today?

Vladimir Putin: I spoke about this. We have been talking about this matter for many years. This includes direct railway traffic between South Korea, North Korea and Russia, including our Trans-Siberian Mainline, opportunities for laying pipelines - we can talk about both oil and gas, as well as the possible construction of new power transmission lines.

All of this is possible. Moreover, in my opinion, this is also in the

interests of the Republic of Korea, I have always had this impression. But, apparently, there is a shortage of sovereignty during the adoption of final decisions, and the Republic of Korea has certain allied obligations before the United States. Therefore, everything stops at a certain moment. As I see it, if these and other similar projects were implemented, this would create essential conditions for increasing trust, which is vitally needed to resolve various problems.

North and South Korean railways have linked up not so long ago. In principle, there is a connection to

Russia already. So far we have been unable to operate trains there, even in the test mode. We will work on this steadily, intensively and patiently. I hope that we will be able to accomplish this someday. The sooner we do this, the better.

Question: Is Kim Jong-un ready to continue contacts with the United States of America? And what is the North Korean leader's mood?

Vladimir Putin: First of all, he is determined to defend his country's national interests and to maintain its security. If North Korea's partners (I am talking about the Americans, in the first

place) voice a desire for constructive dialogue, then I believe that it will eventually prove impossible to do without talks. As I see it, there is no other way. But you had better ask him about what he can or cannot agree to.

Question: Has the topic of North Koreans who work in Russia been raised during the talks? They are supposed to leave our country, but they do not want to. Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Yes, we talked about this. There are several different options here. There are humanitarian issues, and there are issues related to the exercising of

these people's rights. There are smooth, non-confrontational solutions. I must say that the Koreans work well for us, never giving the local authorities any trouble. They are very hardworking people, law-abiding and disciplined. We discussed it.

Question: In the 2000s, there was a six-party format for mediating the Korean issue, and the parties even managed to achieve some agreements. However, for obvious reasons, the format has now been suspended. Do you think it makes sense to revive it under the current conditions?

Vladimir Putin: I do not know whether this format should be resumed right now, but I am deeply convinced that if we reach a situation when we need to work out certain guarantees for one of the parties, in this case, security guarantees for the Democratic People' s Republic of Korea, then international guarantees will have to come into the picture. It is unlikely that agreements between two countries will be enough.

But ultimately, it is up to the country that it primarily concerns, so it is primarily up to North Korea. If that country deems guarantees only

from the United States or from its southern neighbour, South Korea, the Republic of Korea, to be enough – well, good. If this is not enough, which is more likely, I think, and if we get to that at all, which we would like very much, then this six-party talks format will certainly be highly relevant to develop a system of international security guarantees for North Korea.

Question: Mr President, yesterday you signed an executive order introducing a fast-track procedure for issuing Russian passports to Lugansk residents. Are you aware of the fact that the response around

the world and in Ukraine to this initiative was overwhelmingly negative? By doing so, aren't you provoking the country's new president, Vladimir Zelensky?

Vladimir Putin: Are you saying that there was a negative response? It is strange when decisions of this kind are met with a negative response. Let me explain. Poland, for example, has been issuing identity cards to ethnic Poles for as long as ten years, I think, since 2009. Hungary and Romania went as far as give away passports to ethnic Hungarians and Romanians, respectively.

In this connection there is a question: are ethnic Russians living in Ukraine worse than Romanians, Poles or Hungarians, or Ukrainians who live there but feel an unbreakable bond with Russia due to various circumstances (family ties, mixed marriages or other considerations)? I do not see anything extraordinary in this regard.

Moreover, when other countries neighbouring Ukraine have been doing the same for many years, why should Russia refrain from taking the same steps, especially since people living in Donetsk and

Lugansk republics are in a much more challenging situation than the ethnic Poles, Romanians and Hungarians living in Ukraine? In fact, they face a lot of hardship. They are deprived of the most basic human rights, for example in education. They even have problems moving around Ukraine or third countries, and even in Russia. Sometimes they cannot even buy a plane or train ticket. This is beyond all reason.

As for provoking anyone, the government and I personally are far from provoking anyone. The question of passports is a purely humanitarian issue and nothing

more. As for the current Ukrainian authorities and those set to replace them, both the outgoing and the incoming leadership, as far as I know, and judging by their public statements, have never intended and will not sign off on an amnesty bill. They do not intend to recognise the special status of the Lugansk and Donetsk people's republics. These are the key provisions of the Minsk Agreements. This means that they do not intend to implement the Minsk Agreements.

But what about the people who live there? Will they be abandoned? Will they continue to live in complete

isolation? After all, it was not Russia that isolated them, but the Kiev authorities. We were not the ones who did it. This also directly contradicts the Minsk Agreements. They have not restored anything, neither the economic ties, nor financial relations. Nothing. In addition, these people face humanitarian issues. It goes without saying that we cannot stand by and just let it be this way.

That said, provoking anyone is not what we are after. If Ukraine's incoming leadership finds the courage to implement the Minsk Agreements, we will facilitate these

efforts and will do everything to bring the situation back to normal in southeast Ukraine.

Question: To continue on the subject, what is your general assessment of the election in Ukraine? What do you think about the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations with the new President?

Vladimir Putin: I do not know. It will depend on the policy pursued by Ukraine's new political leadership. We want and are ready to restore these relations in full but we cannot do it unilaterally.

As for my assessment, what is there to assess? This is a complete failure of Poroshenko's policy. Complete and absolute. I am sure that the new authorities are bound to understand this. They are well aware of this. Let's look at their first steps at least. Understanding is one thing but adopting a realistic policy in the interests of one's nation is another.

Question: To continue the topic of your executive order, Poroshenko is now trying to rally his partners to convene the UN Security Council. As for the Western reaction, the term of "territorial integrity" is being

used. Does your executive order concern Ukraine's territorial integrity because the President that is still in office qualified it as an attempt at annexation and formation of a Russian enclave on Ukrainian territory?

Vladimir Putin: Look, I think I have already answered this question. When other neighbouring states issued passports, there were no attempts to submit this question to the UN Security Council. But why are they being made in this case? What is the difference? There is none at all. The only thing is that people living in the Lugansk and

Donetsk people' s republics are in a much worse position. This is a humanitarian issue. Well, let him submit it and we will discuss it.

At one time Mr Poroshenko suggested there should be a UN presence on these territories for protecting and ensuring the security of OSCE observers. We agreed but our Ukrainian partners instantly rejected the idea. They demanded more than that, notably, that everything should be transferred to the UN forces. This is a separate issue and it may be discussed. However, this is not a desire to resolve the issue through dialogue

with the people who live on these territories. These are all attempts to bend them in this or that way, to resolve these issues by using force, either directly or indirectly, and, in effect to settle the legitimacy issue with regard to the government produced by the coup d' état.

Thank you. I wish you all the best.

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60370>