

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



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PRESS RELEASE

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Alexander Yakovenko Meets with Marek Belka, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

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Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Alexander Yakovenko met on February 21 in Geneva during a session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe with UNECE Executive Secretary Marek Belka.

Yakovenko presented Marek Belka with a congratulatory letter from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, and expressed confidence that his rich administrative experience accumulated at, inter alia, the post of Polish Prime Minister and his deep knowledge of today's problems of the region and, in particular, of the developmental characteristics and specific requirements of a large regional group of transition economies in the social and economic domain would help him to successfully perform his new duties at a crucial stage of implementation of the scheduled reforms in the UNECE.

Yakovenko stressed that for Russia the UNECE is especially important owing to its being, in fact, the sole universal agency for economic cooperation in Europe. Over the course of its existence the Commission has proved its ability to be a valuable instrument of international cooperation. We are for enhancing the effectiveness of, and member countries' need for its program activity, and bolstering the UNECE's coordinating role in the work of the organizations of the UN system on the European continent.

He noted that Moscow positively evaluates current cooperation by Russia with the UNECE. We believe that there is a considerable untapped potential for its expansion, through, inter alia, actualizing problems and by drawing Russian business structures and federal subjects into cooperation. Russia is keen on promoting and deepening cooperation with the UNECE in the context of the Russian economy's integration into the European and world economy. The UNECE retains among authoritative multilateral and regional structures in Europe comparative advantages in a number of essential areas of international cooperation for Russia. First and foremost, this applies to the formation within the Commission framework

of a legal basis in the fields of transportation, ecology, energy, and individual aspects of international trade. It was stressed that in the interests of further development of cooperation between Russia and the UNECE we consider it important to recruit Russian experts for work in the Commission's secretariat.

Assessing the Work Plan for Reform of the UNECE, Yakovenko noted that, like other Commission members, Russia supports the reform, bearing in mind to raise the effectiveness of how the Commission is run, adapt its priorities and programs to the new realities in Europe, and strengthen intergovernmental control over the activities of the Secretariat and of the numerous working bodies of the UNECE, which, in the opinion of member countries, has substantially weakened in recent years.

We see the chief objective of the reform in maximally using in member countries' interests the available potential of the UNECE and its real advantages in program sectors, forms and methods of work, compared to other European intergovernmental organizations.

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