



Brussels, 26 August 2014
140826/02

P R E S S R E M A R K S

of the EU representatives at Minsk meetings

High Representative / Vice-President Ashton

"Good evening everyone,

This is not the final press conference because one of the most important aspects of today is the meeting that is now taking place between President Poroshenko and President Putin, something that we've facilitated during the course of the day. But we wanted to give you a brief update on the meetings taking place today, here in Minsk.

You will know that President Lukashenko our host, together with President Putin, President Poroshenko, President Nazerbayev, invited the European Union, myself as High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission, together with Karel De Gucht, the Commissioner for trade and Gunter Oettinger the Commissioner for energy, to come here to join the discussion that is taking place.

The focus of our concern, as you know, is the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, the importance of the peace and security discussions. The meeting took place for several hours including a dinner and focusing on two areas.

The first discussion on the economic aspects of the discussions between the different nations, especially between Russia and Ukraine and of course the role of the European Union, and I invite my colleagues to say something about these discussions, and the discussions on energy today as well.

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And then the second part, which was very much about the peace and security issues. I have to say too and I made the point throughout the meeting that this was in my view the most important aspect of the meeting. We called for a ceasefire, linked to the proper management of borders. The importance of insuring that humanitarian support reached people in a proper manner, in full line with international law, and of course the political process and outreach that needs to take place. And as I have already indicated, one of the outcomes of this meeting is the meeting that is I believe still on-going between President Putin and President Poroshenko.

Let me if I may invite my colleagues to say few words about the particular aspects they've been involved in and then we'll take a few questions.

Commissioner De Gucht

Very very briefly. We are in fact talking about a political conflict, that has trade ramifications, not the other way around. I believe that we can find a solution for the so called trade ramifications of the DCFTA and we are discussing that. The process continues at the technical level and on 12 September we will again meet in Brussels at the political level.

But what this is really about, us as Cathy rightly stated, is a political conflict, and we should resolve that one so that the bloodshed in Ukraine stops and so that we can find a solution then that both parties can politically agree to. And that is something we humbly have tried to do today and I have to say that I am personally pleased that finally President Poroshenko and President Putin are meeting.

Commission Vice-President Oettinger

The other sector is one of the main political and economic sectors, being relevant for all countries here today. It's oil, it's gas, it's coal, it's uranium. We have long-term relations between the EU and Kazakhstan, looking to oil. We have a transit function, which is for Ukraine and Belarus. And we have oil, gas and coal coming from the Russian Federation to the European Union's markets.

Our main concern, no doubt, is gas. We have on-going bilateral and trilateral contacts and talks and negotiations between the Russian Federation and Gazprom on one hand and Ukraine and Naftogaz and our European Commission. Today we agreed to continue to have formal trilateral contacts, and on Friday we will be in Moscow to prepare for the next trilateral consultation between the Russian Federation/Gazprom and Ukraine/Naftogaz with the EU as a moderator of important process.

Our ambition was and is to avoid any problems in the next months linked to the security of supply: gas for everybody in the EU28, plus the Western Balkan states, plus Ukraine and Moldova is our ambition. Therefore, we have to do something, and my proposal was to come to an interim solution.

Two cases are in Stockholm going through the arbitration court. We have to accept this process. But this process takes 12-15 months and we can't wait for a decision from

Stockholm – we need an interim solution for the next winter. We agreed to continue and maybe we should come to an interim solution and to an interim price.

And so it was a constructive atmosphere and I'm sure today we have got some common input for our next trilateral. And gas can maybe be a door-opener for the whole high-level political process for the next weeks and months.

Thank you."

Video of the Press conference:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I092051>
