

Joint Statement by the Coordinators of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission

The Presidential Commission is broadening and deepening cooperation between the United States and Russia. Its mandate is broad and its agenda ambitious. Since its establishment last July, over 100 meetings and exchanges have taken place under the auspices of the Commission, bringing together over 60 Russian and United States government agencies, not to mention an increasing number of business and non-profit partners. The Commission has brought fresh faces and new issues to our bilateral agenda and has created new channels of cooperation to advance strategic stability, international security, our mutual economic well-being, and stronger ties between Russians and Americans.

Security cooperation is an important focus of the Commission. The new START treaty is an example of greater U.S.-Russia collaboration on the global issues we are facing today. The co-chairs of the Policy Steering Group have intensified consultation and coordination on the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs and on Middle East peace. New routes have been opened for the transit of personnel and equipment to support international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. The Arms Control and International Security Working Group is examining cooperation on missile defense, developing ways to enhance stability and transparency, and jointly assessing 21st century threats and challenges. Through the Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Security Working Group, we have carried out initiatives to secure and eliminate nuclear materials around the globe, and in April, we concluded an agreement on the Protocol to amend the 2000 Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, which will dispose of enough weapons-grade plutonium for 17,000 nuclear warheads. We are also continuing to work with other nations to secure and eliminate excess stocks of proliferation sensitive nuclear materials worldwide. Joint activities are being conducted to promote the safe use of civilian nuclear power and to work toward entry into force of the Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.

In addition, the Counterterrorism and Counternarcotics Working Groups have generated closer collaboration on issues vital to our shared security. We have started sharing financial intelligence to fight illicit financial flows related to drug smuggling and our law enforcement agencies are conducting joint investigations to target regional drug traffickers along the Afghan northern distribution route. Cooperative measures are being undertaken to prevent terrorist attacks on our transportation systems, to launch a joint initiative within the G8 to assist victims of terrorism, and to counter the roots of violent extremism. The Military Cooperation Working Group is improving relations between our armed forces as illustrated by the inaugural participation of American forces in Victory Day festivities in Red Square and the June docking of the Russian Pacific Fleet's flag ship in San Francisco. In addition to cooperation in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, our armed forces are planning a counterterrorism exercise involving an aircraft hijacking scenario.

Beyond the security arena, we recognize that both our countries can each play a vital role in this century as engines of sustainable growth and centers of innovative thinking. The Innovation Dialogue, which bridges several Commission working groups, has established ties among high-

tech industries, venture capitalists, scientific institutions, and idea-makers to promote innovation-based entrepreneurship across economic sectors and to utilize communication technologies to improve educational, cultural, and public health services.

The Business Development and Economic Relations Working Group is addressing ways to remove barriers to trade and developing measures to encourage investment, strengthen intellectual property protection, and facilitate the development of small business in both countries. Working Groups on Energy and Science and Technology have brought together government experts, academics, and businessmen to advance cooperation on energy efficiency, the development of low carbon fuels and climate science, e-government, and nanotechnology. New pilot projects on cutting-edge “smart grid” technology will help stimulate greater economic growth as well as help us address climate change. The positive momentum generated by the Commission’s activities in these areas is stimulating the growth in Russian-American economic ties and creating thousands of jobs in both countries.

The Commission is also bolstering joint efforts to safeguard the health of our people and our planet. Key achievements of the Health Working Group include the launching of a Health Science Forum to promote joint biomedical research and the completion of more than a dozen medical professional and research exchanges related to HIV/AIDS research, maternal and child health, and healthy lifestyles best practices. Under the auspices of the Environment and Agriculture Working Groups, we are collaborating on environmental issues in the Arctic and supporting tiger, polar bear, and other wildlife conservation efforts. We are also cooperating on water quality and hazardous sites clean-up. Building on more than 50 years of cooperation, our forest service agencies have also enhanced efforts to sustainably manage forests and stop illegal logging. Combined efforts in Haiti and Russia’s offer of assistance in the Gulf of Mexico show that we are strengthening our capacity to respond to disasters and crises under the Emergency Situations Working Group. American and Russian space agencies interact regularly in the Space Cooperation Working Group, including on shared use of the International Space Station, and they are discussing potential projects to expand cooperation in space exploration.

Finally, the Commission has achieved remarkable success in broadening the contacts between American and Russian citizens. For example, the Education, Culture, and Sports Working Group has launched new exchange initiatives and nearly doubled the number of partnerships between American and Russian universities. In May, the group completed its first youth basketball exchange in the United States; over the next several months, exchanges in swimming, volleyball, and youth hockey will take place in the U.S. and Russia. Cultural exchanges have also expanded, supporting over 40 cultural events in the U.S. and Russia, and steps are being taken to protect common cultural heritage, including the Fort Ross historical landmark in California. The Civil Society Working Group has opened an unprecedented dialogue between our governments and among Russian and American non-governmental organizations on issues of common concern, including fighting corruption and the exploitation and trafficking of children in addition to prison reform and migration issues. Taken together, these efforts are making a difference. Opinion polls show that Russians and Americans already have more positive attitudes towards each other’s country.

Looking ahead over the next twelve months, we recommend an expansion of the Commission's mandate to include a new working group on intelligence issues to strengthen our common security. We also agree to redouble our efforts to realize the unmet potential of our economic and trade relations. In this regard, we recommend the Commission devote greater attention to the development of joint activities to help increase our capacities for creativity and dynamism, facilitate innovation-based entrepreneurship, and advance our mutual prosperity and well-being.

To read the report, please visit www.state.gov/russiabpc

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