

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 293a06

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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Chairmanship of Committee of Ministers: Russian Federation presents its priorities

Strasbourg, 19.05.2005 – Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, today presented in Strasbourg the programme of the Russian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. He underlined his country's approach to the Council of Europe as an important European cooperation mechanism aimed at building a Europe without dividing lines and the establishment of a single European legal and humanitarian space. He said the motto for his country's chairmanship would be: "Towards United Europe without dividing lines".

Russia's priorities will be based around five broad themes:

1 - Reinforcing national human rights protection mechanisms, development of human rights education and protection of rights of national minorities:

the Russian chairmanship will stress the importance of

- preserving a single human rights protection space in Europe, including the protection of rights of national minorities;
- developing and improving the activities of the Strasbourg Court and taking measures to avoid the deterioration of quality or the politicisation of its work;
- reinforcing the legislative linkage between the Court's case-law and national practice as well as procedural interaction;
- including human rights education and awareness-raising on relevant norms and standards and their application.

2. Creating a common European legal space to protect individuals from modern-day challenges:

- Russia will continue work on rendering the key conventions truly pan-European, ensuring their uniform interpretation and full application;
- Russia will aspire to create a common pan-European space in the development of direct cooperation between the supreme legal (judicial) bodies of member states;
- Russia will promote the expansion of the thematic and geographical scope of activities of the Venice Commission as well as the activities of GRECO and the Pompidou Group.

3. Improving access to social rights, protection of vulnerable groups:

- In developing the idea of building a more humane Europe accepted at the Council's Third Summit, Russia intends to make a specific contribution to the implementation of the ten-year plan to improve the life of people with disabilities in Europe;
- As a follow-up to the Monaco Conference, Russia will strive to ensure that the Council's programme to protect children's rights produces specific results;

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.

4. Developing efficient forms of democracy and civic participation, promoting good governance :

- Russia will boost this process in cooperation with the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- Russia will advance the Congress initiative to set up a Centre on inter-regional and transborder cooperation.

5. Strengthening tolerance and mutual understanding through the development of dialogue, cooperation in the field of culture, education, science, youth and sports:

- As a follow-up to the theme of intercultural dialogue, Russia will develop first and foremost on the basis of equality, mutual respect, and participants' desire to understand and adapt to each other;
- Russia will pay particular attention to youth education and youth contacts.

The Russian chairmanship will end in November 2006. Seminars and conferences on the following themes will be organised :

- Conference of Prosecutors General of Europe (Moscow, July 2006);
- International forum on "Intercultural dialogue and interconfessional co-operation" (Nizny Novgorod, September 2006);
- Colloquy on cultural heritage in the framework (St Petersburg, September 2006);
- European Youth Forum on "All Different – All Equal" (St Petersburg, September 2006);
- Informal meeting of European Ministers responsible for Sport (Moscow, October 2006)