RESOLUTION

SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE OF FINLAND AND NORTH-WEST RUSSIA

The Chambers of Commerce of Finland and North-West Russia gathered in Pskov, Russia on 16-18 September 2009 for the Sixth Conference of the Chambers of Commerce of Finland and North-West Russia (hereinafter Conference). The previous Conferences were held in Tuusula, Finland (1999), St. Petersburg, Russia (2001), Joensuu, Finland (2003), Kirishi, Russia (2005) and Rovaniemi, Finland (2007).

Among other issues, the Conference discussed the enhancement of co-operation between the Chambers of Commerce and the authorities, particularly for the benefit of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). The Conference considered ways in which to ease the entry of SMEs into the Russian and Finnish markets, to improve the operating environment for companies, to increase export, import and investment activities, including innovation, and to reduce trade obstacles. The Conference programme also included discussions surrounding business opportunities and their development, and the expansion of the networks among authorities, the Chambers of Commerce and companies. The participants also deliberated on customs and traffic issues, co-operation between Finland and the regions of North-West Russia, discussed the opportunities to develop cooperation between the EU and Russia.

The Chambers of Commerce promote both domestic and cross-border co-operation and networking among companies. They assist companies in the process of internationalisation and support their entry into the relevant markets. The Chambers of Commerce aim to contribute to international agreement systems for the purpose of removing international trade obstacles. They support corporate activities in various capacities, and promote foreign trade and investments through developmental projects.

The effects of the global economic and financial crisis that took hold during autumn 2008 are particularly reflected in the reduction of exports and imports, and in the cancellation and postponement of investment projects. The Chambers of Commerce endeavour, through dynamic and sustained measures, to further develop investments and foreign trade between Finland and Russia despite the current economic situation. The faculty to maintain connections and develop economic relations demands focused perseverance and endurance during difficult times when public measures and collaboration play a key role as well.

The Chairmen of the Central Chambers of Commerce of Finland and the Russian Federation meet annually, most recently in March 2009. Representatives of the Central Chambers of Commerce participate in the joint meetings of the Finnish-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission for Economic Co-operation, and, as members of Eurochambres (the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry), they contribute to fostering favourable development of the economic relations between the EU and Russia. The Chambers of Commerce of Finland and North-West Russia carry out active cross-border co-operation with the intention of increasing activities between companies, promoting trade and investments, supporting innovation, resolving problems and bringing them to the attention of the relevant authorities.

The Chambers of Commerce state the following:

- The co-operation between the Chambers of Commerce within the prevailing difficult economic situation is of vital importance for the establishment and maintenance of

connections between companies, and for the purpose of supporting companies in their foreign trade and investment undertakings.

- Transparency within global economics is a key factor for prosperity and a strong incentive in terms of competition, innovation and growth.
- Participation in international organisations and institutions further reinforces the facilities for economic growth.
- The Chambers of Commerce consider it important to rapidly proceed in the negotiations aimed at a new treaty between the EU and the Russian Federation, and to continue the comprehensive development of the economic relations between the EU and the Russian Federation at all levels. The Conference of the Chamber of Commerce Directors from Finland and Russia is a valuable forum for coordinating and presenting views and opinions concerning trade and economy to the decision-making bodies representing Finland, Russia and the EU.
- The Chambers of Commerce regard the EU-Russia programmes and their funding as an essential part of the process of developing the economic relations between the EU and Russia.
- The Chambers of Commerce support the invitation of all the states bordering the Baltic Sea to join in the Baltic Sea co-operation.
- The Chambers of Commerce emphasise the importance of the development of traffic connections between Finland and Russia.
- The Chambers of Commerce support the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics, the aim of which is to improve the conditions for economic development within the region by developing the traffic infrastructure and multimodal transport, thereby increasing connections between the region and neighbouring countries.
- The Chambers of Commerce support measures aimed at facilitating smooth border crossings, and developing electronic customs clearance and traffic connections.
- The Chambers of Commerce express their concern over plans to reduce the number of temporary border-crossing points between Finland and Russia. Once trade recovers, all border-crossing points must be in use for the purpose of ensuring fluent goods and passenger traffic.
- The Chambers of Commerce encourage companies to participate in investment projects and to create co-operative corporate networks within the Northern regions.
- The Chambers of Commerce emphasise the significance of cross-border co-operation between the regions.

The Finnish and North-West Russian Chambers of Commerce find that it is important to:

- Make good use of the geographic position and historical background of Finland and Russia for the benefit of both countries;
- Contribute significantly to the development of commercial-economic relations, trade stimulation and the removal of trade obstacles between Finland and Russia;
- Encourage broad multidisciplinary co-operation, particularly for the purpose of stimulating and advancing the foreign trade and investments of SMEs within different regions and fields;
- Promote the development of tourism and other services;
- Provide companies with information regarding the effects of Russia’s possible membership in the OECD and WTO;
- Initiate more extensive co-operation related to ethical issues for the purpose of advancing good corporate governance and preventing corruption;
- Develop and test new systems in order to ensure the efficiency of operations on the dawn of an upswing; and
- Continue co-operation in customs and logistics issues (including ATA Carnet), in subcontracting operations within investment projects, as well as in arbitration proceedings.

The Chambers of Commerce will appoint a working group comprised of representatives of the Finnish and Russian Chambers of Commerce to discuss the development of co-operation and to outline a programme for initiating closer co-operation.

The next Conference of the Chambers of Commerce will be held in Finland in 2011.

Timo Rautajoki

Chairman of the Working Group of
Chamber of Commerce Activities
between Russia and Finland

Vladimir I. Katenev
Chairman of the Association of
Chambers of Commerce and
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