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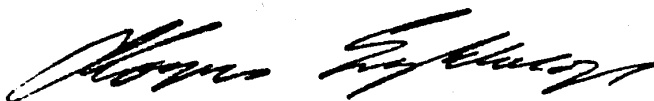
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**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 13 March 2001

7096/01

LIMITE

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INFORMATION NOTE

From: Presidency
in: 13 March 2001
to: COREPER

Subject: **RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA**
Meeting with the President of the Russian Federation, Mr Vladimir Putin, in Stockholm on 23 March 2001 in the margins of the European Council in Stockholm

In response to an invitation by Prime Minister Göran Persson, the President of the Russian Federation, Mr Vladimir Putin, will visit Stockholm on 23 March in the margins of the European Council on 23-24 March 2001, for an informal meeting with EU Heads of State and Government. During his visit to Member State capitals Prime Minister Persson has informed his colleagues about the basic objectives of the meeting with President Putin.

The discussion with President Putin is intended to focus on economic and trade relations between the European Union and Russia. This is particularly appropriate given the overall focus of the European Council in Stockholm on the Lisbon Process. The Russian Presidential administration has indicated its agreement to this proposal.

In this respect due regard should be given to the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which is the legal basis for the bilateral relationship, as well as the EU Common Strategy and the Northern Dimension concept.

At the European Council in Lisbon, the European Union set itself the objective of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. In Russia, President Putin and his Government has launched an extensive reform programme, intended to modernize the Russian economy and improve conditions for trade and investment. The EU's ambitious plans for the next decade will also challenge Russia to accelerate economic and social reforms, if deepened economic integration between the EU and Russia is to be achieved. The meeting between EU leaders and President Putin provides a good opportunity for an open exchange of views on these and other issues of fundamental importance to Russia's integration into a European economic and social space.

Certain key issues are likely to be addressed at the meeting with President Putin. Among them are:

- Russia and WTO: A key component in order to achieve further integration of Russia into the world economy is Russia's adaptation to WTO requirements and possible future membership. On 30 March a high level conference on Russia and the WTO will take place in Moscow under the auspices of the Presidency and the Commission.
- EU-Russia trade disputes: There is a need to urgently resolve remaining long-standing trade disputes, in order to promote a more favourable atmosphere for trade and investment from EU companies.
- Additional credits from the International Financial Institutions: As regards possible lending from the EIB it should be recalled that such lending will be subject to specific criteria and that assessment of project proposals will take place on an individual basis.

Other issues relevant to EU-Russia relations may also be raised during the meeting with President Putin, but time will not allow for an extensive agenda. The EU-Russia Summit scheduled for 17 May in Moscow provides an opportunity to cover many of the issues not mentioned above, including matters related to foreign and security policy.

In view of the forthcoming 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg, which was founded as "Russia's window to Europe", it may be appropriate for the EU to contribute to the celebrations - for instance by highlighting the close historical links between Europe and Russia.

The meeting with President Putin is intended to start late morning on 23 March. After some short introductory remarks by the Prime Minister, President Putin will be invited to make a presentation on Russia's view of the economic relations with the EU, as well as on the state of economic reforms in Russia. The floor will then be opened for a general discussion, which will continue over lunch. After lunch, the Prime Minister and President Putin will give a joint press conference. There will be no joint statement.

Finally, Foreign Minister Anna Lindh has invited Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to take part in the EU Foreign Ministers' lunch in Stockholm 23 March. The discussion is intended to focus on EU-Russia relations and current issues on the international agenda.