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Minsk Dialogue

Pan-European Integration Processes: Towards a Mutual Vision through Cross-Border Synergies

27 October 2016

Concept and draft agenda

Minsk Dialogue Background

The Minsk Dialogue (MD) was launched in March 2015 as a Track-II (non-governmental) diplomacy platform with a focus on international relations and security in Europe and Eurasia. The initiative's rationale was to create an expert-level platform for open and high-quality international discussions beyond geopolitical divides about the most challenging pan-European issues. Up to date, four successful and well attended international conferences have taken place within the MD framework, which gathered in Minsk leading experts from the EU, Russia, Eastern European countries and the USA, as well as representatives of international organisations and the diplomatic community. Each conference was addressed by high-level officials: the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and his deputies, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, the Head of the EU Delegation in Belarus, and others.

After the conferences, the organisers prepared non-papers presenting the core points of agreement and innovative policy recommendations (for Track-I and Track-II stakeholders) developed during conference deliberations. The non-papers were widely circulated among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and used as a source for follow-up research.

Conference Idea

In recent years, academic and policy discussions about pan-European integration processes and relations between regional integration projects have been marred by geopolitical tensions and lack of dialogue. However, the practical need to develop cooperative ties and mutually reinforce integration effects for the benefit of common people, businesses and governments across Europe and Eurasia keep the issue relevant for researchers' and policy-makers' agenda. Thus, the core challenge today is to go beyond geopolitics-loaded discourses and focus on practical opportunities and challenges to pan-European integration processes.

The conference will work on the assumption that a way to greater pan-European integration goes through cross-border cooperation and synergies that result gradually from such mutually beneficial cooperation. To that end, the Minsk Dialogue expert group will prepare a report with an overview of current academic and policy discussions about pan-European integration processes and ideas on how to move these discussions onto a more pragmatic level. The report will be presented at the conference and guide discussions during the conference sessions.

The event will run in parallel with the high-level official conference on pan-European integration processes co-organised by the Government of Belarus and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The United Nations Under-Secretary General – Executive Secretary of UNECE, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, a Eurasian Economic Union Commissioner and other officials are also expected to participate in our Track-II conference.

Conference Objectives

- To examine ways to advance pan-European integration processes by facilitating cross-border cooperation in various areas of mutual interest (economic growth and business opportunities, security challenges, and energy infrastructure).
- To discuss conceptual frameworks for advancing pan-European integration.
- To promote informed discussions about pan-European integration processes and challenges in the media.

Format

Four sessions in the form of panel discussions, all open to the media. Experts, academics and diplomats will be invited as participants.

Organisers and Sponsors

The conference will be organised by the Minsk Dialogue Track-II Initiative (Belarus) in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany) and the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (Austria-France).

Tentative Agenda

- 9.30-10.00 Opening ceremony, welcoming remarks
- 10.00-11.15 Session 1. **Presentation of the expert report, discussion about its key concepts and recommendations.**
- 11.15-11.45 Coffee break.
- 11.45-13.00 Session 2. Panel discussion **Ways to Intensify Cross-Border Economic Exchange and Improve Mutual Competitiveness.**
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch.
- 14.00-15.30 Session 3. Panel discussion **Mutual Security: a Pan-European Security System as a Solution to Cross-Border Challenges?**
- 15.30-16.00 Coffee break.
- 16.00-17.30 Session 4. Panel discussion **Economic Growth and Cross-Border Energy Infrastructure.**
- 17.30-18.00 Closing remarks.