

# Dmitry Medvedev's conversation with Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen

Excerpts from the transcript:



**Dmitry Medvedev's conversation with Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen**

18 October 2018



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**Dmitry Medvedev:** Prime Minister Sen, it is a pleasure to see you. I am glad we are meeting again.

I have warm memories of my visit to Cambodia in November 2015. I think that the meeting was useful for our relations. It was also a fascinating trip.

We met several times again after that visit to discuss the Russia-Cambodia cooperation. This event, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit, is another opportunity to share our views.

I am happy to see you.

**Hun Sen** (*via interpreter*): Thank you for finding the opportunity to meet with me in Brussels. I have fond memories of your visit to the Kingdom of Cambodia. I really hope you can visit Cambodia again when we will be hosting the ASEM summit in 2020.

Thank you for your support of our victory in the parliamentary elections in Cambodia. As you know, the Cambodian People's Party secured a strong victory.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** It was indeed an impressive success.

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## [Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Euronews TV channel](#)

The Russian Prime Minister answers questions of TV host Tesa Arcilla ahead of the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Euronews TV channel

**Tesa Arcilla:** Joining us on the programme is Russian Prime Minister Dmitry

Medvedev. Thank you very much, Mister Medvedev, for joining us on the programme.

Earlier this month EU Council President Donald Tusk said that Vladimir Putin's Russia represents a biggest threat to the unity of the European Union. Is he right?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Donald Tusk is not all the European Union. We met before, and I'm aware of his position on various matters. We met under different circumstances. To reiterate, things that a person who heads the European Commission says do not reflect the opinion of the whole of the European Union. Let's leave that on his conscience.

**Tesa Arcilla:** You are going to go there to the European-Asian summit. Obviously, you want to talk about trade. But geopolitics obviously impacts trade. What does Russia have to offer, to put on the table, and what does Russia want in order to fix the relationship between Europe and Russia?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** First of all, I'd like to say a few words about the ASEM Summit. I think this is a fairly good platform to assess the prospects for expanding cooperation on the European and Asian tracks. Clearly, this summit is not a place where major decisions are made. In this sense, the G20 summit is precisely the venue where decisions are made. Actually, it has been playing that role since 2008. The ASEM Summit is of a consultative nature, but it is nonetheless a productive and important platform in which we participate as well. The previous summit was held in Mongolia. It was a useful meeting where the leaders of the European Union, representatives of Russia, the Asia-Pacific Region and ASEAN countries shared their thoughts. In general, all of this made it possible for us to better understand each other. If we look back on the relations between Russia and the EU, let us face it, these relations are going through hard times. We believe that this is the result of rather hasty decisions made by the European Union itself. And I think EU residents are the ones paying for these decisions (I emphasise once again, we did not initiate them). Of course, this negatively affects our country as well. Businesses are paying for it. Ultimately, it affects the people because a significant part of trade and economic cooperation was suspended, and cultural cooperation was reduced significantly. Unfortunately, we have lost our dialogue with some countries.

You mentioned Mr Tusk. Although he is a European official, he nevertheless comes from Poland. I can openly say that we have no relations with Poland at the political or economic dialogue level. Is that good or bad? I am not sure. I think this is not very good, even if we think about the specific history that links our countries. In any case, when I visited Poland at some point, I think we were much closer to establishing a dialogue. Now, this dialogue is nonexistent, and there's nothing good about that, either.

**Tesa Arcilla:** I acknowledge that you are saying that Russia thinks that you are not the initiator in this conflict between the two, but Europe probably thinks otherwise. I have just come from Brussels and the conversation happening there most recently is about what Dutch authorities are saying when they intercepted the cyber attacks in the OPSW (*Organisation for the*

*Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*) which is the chemical watchdog investigating the Skripal poisoning and the chemical attacks in Syria. Also, there was the coordinated accusation against Russia, and you have four countries, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada and the US. And you have Jeremy Hunt who said that Russia is trying to foster instability throughout the world.

Now, Russia does not accept these accusations, clearly. If Russia does not take these seriously, why should Russia be taken seriously when you present your country there?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** I don't quite understand what you mean. You are saying that Russia should be perceived in some way. You see, we attend these events not to be seen in some way, or to receive marks. Estimations may vary.

We attend for different reasons. We believe that it is better to cooperate than to refuse to cooperate, talking is better than not talking, and agreeing on things is better than to be in some kind of opposition.

Development is better than stagnation. That's why we take part in all international events of this kind. Any country has a right to voice its assessments. We listen to them, but Russia's leaders and our country as a whole do not agree with most of them. But this does not mean we should refuse to communicate. Actually, I suppose that I will have to talk to different types of colleagues at the ASEM Summit. Communication always includes two parts: the first part is pre-arranged official meetings, with interpreters and video cameras, and the second part is talking behind the scenes. Sometimes the latter is even more useful, with no one rushing you and trying to transcribe it all and posting it online. But these kinds of contacts are common, and at the latest ASEM Summit in Mongolia I had many meetings with my colleagues from different countries, at different venues and even at events like the official dinner. I remember what Mr Tusk – and this is the third time we have mentioned him – said about the Mongolian cuisine as well as a number of other issues. But this does not mean that this is what political contacts are limited to.

**Tesa Arcilla:** think you are right that there is a lot of conversation that does not happen in public [but] behind closed doors. And for sure leaders will bring up very sensitive topics, one of which – especially for the UK – is the case of the Skripal poisoning. The defence given by the two suspects was mocked in Europe or outside of Russia. Are you embarrassed by that reaction? Do you think it damages Russia's credibility?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** You know, any evaluation like this definitely does not promote international cooperation. I remember the Soviet era, when the Soviet Union would use labels and stigmatise the international system of capitalism and talk about the things that divided us, but this did not lead to anything good. That is why we believe that everyone has to be careful when giving assessments. First, the assessments voiced by a number of countries do not reflect the actual situation, and second, they definitely are not leading us to a better tomorrow. Who benefits from these evaluations and the various sanctions imposed? It is obvious that any sanctions most definitely lead us into a dead end.

We understand why it is happening. In the majority of cases, similar assessments and similar sanctions are not meant to punish anyone, or do anyone harm, or demonstrate an international position. No! They have other reasons – they are for the sake of an internal political situation.

Today, we have not yet talked about our friends across the ocean, for example, the anti-Russia hysteria in the United States of America. We are perfectly aware of the fact that all that is connected with Russia in the United States now has a different goal – internal political squabbles; in fact, arguments between the Republicans and the Democrats and arguments inside the Republican Party. The same can be said about the European countries. Nine times out of ten, this anti-Russia campaign is in pursuit of entirely internal political goals: to stay in power, form a government or achieve some other goal. But certainly not to influence Russia's position. It cannot be influenced, something that everyone realises very well.

Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Euronews TV channel

**Tesa Arcilla:** I want to talk about the sanctions and of course, about the economy, but before that I want to ask you about the two Skripal suspects, just because I want to know if you really believe that they went there to see a cathedral.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** I do not know. I will not comment, just because I am not acquainted with those people, neither am I acquainted with the comments to a sufficient degree. I do not know. How can I know?

**Tesa Arcilla:** Now I want to ask you about the US-imposed sanctions. You mentioned that that they brought it up on Russia over election interference. You said that American sanctions against Russian banks would amount to a declaration of economic war. But does Russia see itself at war with America or anyone who imposed sanctions on your country?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** I have spoken out on this matter before.

Clearly, the tightening of the screws in the sanctions stand-off will end in nothing good. The Americans keep saying that they intend to build up the sanction pressure. I have already said and want to repeat again that sanctions against the Soviet Union (although we are not the Soviet Union and although the Russian state has other values, we are, nevertheless, the legal successors to the Soviet Union) were announced 10 times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I repeatedly mentioned this. Did it change the Soviet Union's policy in any respect? Sanctions were announced against the People's Republic of China. Did it change in any respect the course followed by the political leadership of China? And so on and so forth. Sanctions are an absolutely counter-productive idea.

And sanctions against the banking sector are, in fact, a declaration of trade war. These are the hardest sanctions. But without a doubt, we will be able to overcome this kind of pressure. The only question is why one would need this.

I mean that this tends to upset international order, including the international economic order.

Currently there are trade wars – this is what they are, as a matter of fact – between the United States and China, between the United States and the European Union and between the United States and Iran. Some of the sanctions target our country. It begs the question: does the international trading system stand to gain from this? Have the countries become better off? Or are businesses feeling more comfortable? Yes, some domestic policy objectives can be achieved in the short term.

**Tesa Arcilla:**How would Russia react? You said that Russia will react to this war economically, politically or, if needed, by other means. What do you mean? What other means?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** There could be quite different responses depending on the situation.

**Tesa Arcilla:**Military is that? No...

**Dmitry Medvedev:** This is absolutely out of the question in the contemporary world. We are a responsible state and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. These issues fall within the terms of reference of the country's supreme authority. These issues are within the competence of the country's president.

There are various forms of response in today's world, including, as I said, asymmetrical responses. This is not necessarily military in nature. It is not necessary to respond to economic threats or economic racket with adequate economic means. This is what it is. We understand that, for example, the extent of the integration, or mutual dependence of the Russian and US economies is insignificant. American businesses are not much affected by the sanctions that the United States has imposed on our country because the amount of trade is modest. But European businesses have been hit hard because the amount of trade is huge. Currently, trade with the United States is estimated at about \$20 billion – this is a low period, though. This is nothing. The amount of trade with the European Union is much more significant, as the European Union accounts for 45 percent of our trade. This figure runs into the hundreds of billions of euros. I will just give you one example. After the sanctions were imposed, our trade with the European Union all but halved, plunging from 430 billion euros to 220-230 billion euros at some point. So my question is: what losses has Europe incurred? Europe lost jobs.

It lost revenue. It lost confidence in developing even small regions which, in one way or another, were centred on trade with our country. This is why sanctions are a bad approach. Actually, we keep saying this, but we did not initiate them, and we are not the ones that can end them.

**Tesa Arcilla:** The sanctions the US imposed on Russia... but despite that, Donald Trump seems to still be perhaps a little more friendly than others. Is Donald Trump the best thing that happened to Russia in recent time?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** We did not elect Donald Trump. Donald Trump is the President of the United States of America. We respect the choice of the American people. If there were a different president instead of Trump, we would respect him no less. As far as we can see, Donald Trump is having a hard time because he is being attacked by the right and by the left. On the one hand, he is suspected of having some sort of sympathy towards our country even though he actually has not yet done anything to radically improve relations between our countries. And he is unlikely to do – due to the pressure being put on him. And on the other hand, he is being pressured in other areas.

**Tesa Arcilla:** To bring about pressure. I will bring about the pressure internally in Russia. We have seen protests on the streets maybe because of the pension reform; there were pictures of you, actually, people were writing “enemy of the people.” Are you worried about the discontent in the street now? And is your party pursuing austerity, and are you worried about this discontent?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Do you now mean the situation in our country?

**Tesa Arcilla:** Yeah, in Russia.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Any changes in the country are naturally viewed differently by the people. If you mean the issues related to changes in pension legislation, such reforms are never made easily in any country. These are complicated reforms that make people worry about their lives. Nevertheless, and I have said this a number of times, these changes are necessary. And we resorted to those measures bearing in mind that such reforms were necessary in the absolute majority of countries that had reached a certain level of development and certain living standards. This is why these decision are taken. I mean to say that now the living standards are different and life expectancy in our country was increased to 73 years, which makes the situation radically different from what it was, say, in the 1940s or 1950s when the retirement age was set.

This is an objective although difficult reality.

I think the explanation that was given and the amendments that were made to the bill, the amendments that were eventually approved and signed, alleviated some concerns. So I think that overall the situation will calm down soon.

**Tesa Arcilla:** I am going to go to Syria now. Some would argue that Russia has achieved its goal over there, taking the lead and essentially sidelining the US. What kind of guarantees can Russia give to the Syrians that they can come back and their lives will be better than under Assad when they fled? Because Russia wants to rebuild it. What guarantees can they give the Syrian people?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Syria has indeed suffered a great deal. I went to Syria in 2010. And Syria at the time left a very good impression on me compared to the other countries in the region, which I have said repeatedly since then. It was an ordinary, modern and relatively secular state where representatives of different faiths lived side by side peacefully (at the time, of course),



including Muslims, Christians and Alawites which are treated differently by different religions and different states. Currently, the circumstances in Syria are, of course, completely reversed. In my opinion, the goal for the global community is to make sure that peace is restored on Syrian soil. Naturally, at the request of the Syrian state, the Syrian leadership, we are helping to restore order. The president has attested to this multiple times and it is a transparent situation.

But we hope that it will be over, that Syria will elect its leaders and enter a recovery phase. Some rules will change. A national dialogue will be put in motion. Only then will it be possible to bring peace back to Syria. We are ready to help in

every possible way.

**Tesa Arcilla:** Mr Medvedev, I have only got 30 seconds. I will say a name and you tell me the first thing that comes to mind.

Donald Trump. The first thing that comes to mind.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** The President of the United States of America.

**Tesa Arcilla:** Putin

**Dmitry Medvedev:** The President of Russia.

**Tesa Arcilla:**No, you have to give me something more than that. What is the first thing that comes to describe him?

**Dmitry Medvedev:** But he is indeed the President of our country. What should be on my mind? Besides that, he is a person that I have known for a very long time.

**Tesa Arcilla:** Jean-Claude Juncker.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** This is also one of our colleagues, the leader of the European Union.

**Tesa Arcilla:** One word, please.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** I do not have any other associations although we are on good terms. I hope I will see him at the summit.

**Tesa Arcilla:** You will see Angela Merkel.

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Yes, the same goes for Angela Merkel. We have known each other for a long time. We have generally good relationship, even despite the recent disagreements.

Alright, if you want more associations from me, there is another obvious association with Angela Merkel, for example. I remember her saying that she grew up in East Germany.

**Tesa Arcilla:** Thank you very much for your time. It was Russian Prime



Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

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## **Dmitry Medvedev will meet with several heads of state from Europe and Asia, including Angela Merkel and Jean-Claude Juncker, as part of the ASEM summit**

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev will hold a number of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Europe-Asia Meeting (ASEM) in Brussels on 18-19 October.

In particular, the schedule includes meetings with President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, Prime Minister of Belgium Charles Michel and Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen.

During the meetings the participants will address current issues of bilateral cooperation in the trade, economic, investment, cultural, humanitarian and other fields, as well as the implementation of joint projects.

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## **The 7th Open Innovations Moscow international forum**

The plenary session's theme is Smart Country: National Strategy.

Plenary session of the 7th Open Innovations Moscow International Forum

The international innovation-driven development forum, Open Innovations, has been held in Moscow since 2012 and is co-hosted by the Ministry of Economic Development, the Moscow Government, the Rusnano Fund for Infrastructure and Educational Programmes, the Russian Venture Company, the Foundation for Promoting Innovation, the Skolkovo Foundation and Vnesheconombank.

In 2018, the Open Innovations forum is taking place between October 15-17 as

a three-day themed discussion at the Skolkovo Technology Park with the participation of the Foreign Investment Advisory Council. The theme of this year's forum is Sources of Digital Breakthrough.

The first day of the forum was dedicated to the digitalisation and modernisation of education. The agenda of the second day includes digital transformation of the business environment and development of the innovation-driven ecosystem. On the third day, the forum participants will focus on science and technology.

**Dmitry Medvedev's remarks at the plenary session:**



**Plenary session of the 7th Open Innovations Moscow International Forum**

16 October 2018



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## Plenary session of the 7th Open Innovations Moscow International Forum

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Plenary session of the 7th Open Innovations Moscow International Forum

Good afternoon, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, welcome to our Open Innovations forum. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> such forum, and the topic of today's discussions is Smart Country. Everyone, I'm sure, already knows what a smart home is. Now we need to make a smart home out of our country.

In the digital age, the speed and magnitude of change is growing steadily. To take advantage of the benefits offered by progress, it is imperative to create an environment that is capable of being constantly upgraded. The main components include modern technological infrastructure and readiness of the people to develop and use these innovative technologies. Only in this case is it possible to proceed with digitalisation, which will bring the economy, the social sphere, and state management to a new level of efficiency, to a level that corresponds to the Smart Country concept.

These are the goals Russia is pursuing today. As you may be aware, we have adopted the Digital Economy programme, and it works. Currently it is being reformatted into a national project, which shows the importance we attach to the digital economy. It includes six federal projects on key areas of

digitalisation. The cost of the programme is 1 trillion roubles. In all, we will allocate a total of 2 trillion roubles in public investment to developing the digital economy. We clearly understand that the task is complex and there is a lot of work to do. So, I will focus on key areas that should turn Russia into such a smart country.

The first and probably the most important thing is people themselves – for smart people make a Smart Country. On the one hand, we are talking about the leaders of change; on the other hand, what matters is the ability to translate changes into scientific projects, innovative products, various services, and management decisions. I am confident that there are a lot of such people in Russia.

I will give one example, very eloquent in itself: for eight years now, no one has been able to beat our country, our young people at the ACM ICPC International Collegiate Programming Contest. This year, Moscow State University students won the contest, and before them, the ITMO University team held the first place for seven years in a row. No one has ever done that. This is an example proving that we have a really large number of people capable of transforming Russia into a modern Smart Country.

We intend to dramatically increase the number of specialists in the digital economy trained at Russian universities, from 48,000 to 120,000 people per year (by 2024). We will definitely support young mathematicians and computer programmers. This is one of the parts of the Digital Economy programme; funds have been allocated for it.

On the other hand, a Smart Country is hardly possible without the activity of ordinary users. As research shows, people in Russia are much more willing to adopt technological innovations than even the Europeans.

Last year, our country for the first time ranked with the top ten digital economy leaders in the Digital Society Index ranking – due to the high involvement of people. Digital services such as calling a taxi, car sharing, bicycle rental, buying food and other goods online have become an everyday thing for many Russians. In the very least these services have one advantage: they eliminate the middlemen, and therefore make the service less expensive. For a country as large as Russia, this innovation also reaches out to remote areas, qualitatively changing the lives of people there.

E-commerce grew by more than a quarter, by 26 percent last year, and continues to grow. We plan on helping people master new technologies through public educational programmes.

The second point we plan to focus on is infrastructure development. Access to knowledge and competencies must be supported by access to the technology proper. We also have some achievements when it comes to this. Russia ranks first in Europe and sixth in the world by the number of internet users – largely due to the fact that it is less costly than in many developed countries. We simply must keep up this competitive advantage.

However, it must be admitted that digitalisation has mostly covered big

cities so far. While Moscow and St Petersburg can be compared with most global leaders, other Russian regions are still lagging behind. We intend to eliminate this digital inequality, especially to be able to expand the potential of medicine, online learning and the provision of public services. This will naturally require the development of data storage and processing infrastructure and network deployment for what is known as the Internet of Things. The Digital Economy programme also stipulates work in these spheres.

One of them is the development of next-generation cellular networks. Russian operators are already testing 5G equipment; the project is costly and requires to be thought out properly. We have to build an infrastructure for new services with increased requirements for data transfer speed and response time. This is probably especially important in the context of the problem the world is now considering – creating artificial intelligence.

Smart Country requires national technological leaders. Digitalisation is a powerful incentive for innovation. Therefore, the third target of our work is cooperation with the most successful high-tech companies and creating incentives for more high-tech companies to grow.

More to be soon...

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## [Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi](#)

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## Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi

**Dmitry Medvedev:** Mr President, colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you in Moscow. This is a very important visit. You have a very busy schedule, Mr President. Tomorrow you will meet with your counterpart, President Putin, for talks in Sochi. A fundamental agreement on strategic partnership will be signed to mark a new stage of our traditionally friendly relations.

We have special, privileged relations with the Arab Republic of Egypt, which is our key partner in the Middle East. We have many ambitious investment projects. I hope that our meeting and tomorrow's talks will give an additional impetus to our relations and everything we will agree upon will be implemented.

Lately, we have observed a boost in mutual trade between our countries, with a growth of over one third against last year. We must work to make this trend permanent.

Even the current weather in Moscow is giving an additional friendly impetus to your visit, and I am positive that it will be marked by new agreements. Let me once again cordially welcome you.

**Abdel Fattah el-Sisi:** (*via interpreter*): Thank you very much, Mr Prime Minister. First, I would like to thank you for the hospitality, for the hearty welcome and the opportunity to meet with you.

I would like to point out the following facts to members of the Russian delegation. The relations between our countries have developed very dynamically for over 70 years. I would like to say that the assistance the Russian Federation has provided to our country is remembered and cherished by our people, the people of Egypt, who do not forget that numerous projects were implemented in our country with Russia's help during the 1950s and 1960s. These are projects in heavy industry, the construction of the Aswan High Dam implemented with the assistance from Russia and Russian experts. It was Egyptian people's hope, and it is a fact we must remember today because there is a new, young generation that has not seen this, and we have to remind them of it all the time.

Just like in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Russia supported our country and stood by our side during one of Egypt's most difficult periods in modern history. I am speaking of the revolution of 30 June 2013, when our country found itself in a very difficult situation and was close to collapse. Russia and Mr Putin supported our country at that hard time. We have always remembered it and will never forget it.

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