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Putin: Russia will never follow instructions from the West

12/4/2014

Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered the annual address to the Federal Assembly in the St. George's Hall of the Grand Kremlin Palace on Thursday, December 4th.

In the beginning of the speech, President Putin thanked citizens of the Russian Federation for showing their resilience in the face of tribulations that Russia had to experience this year. Putin called the Russians a "mature nation." "Russia has proved that it was capable of protecting its compatriots, defending truth with honor and justice." "Our country has done it thanks to you, citizens of Russia," Putin said in the beginning of the Address to the Federal Assembly.

Afterwards, he proceeded to the topic of Crimea's reunification with Russia. Putin called the reunification of the Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia a historic event and stated that Russia believed in itself. "Russia believes in itself, in the fact that it can do a lot and that it will achieve everything," Putin said, Interfax reports. Putin also said that for Russia, the Crimea remains of great civilizational and sacred value. The president assured that the Russians would treat the Crimea this way now and forever.

Putin said that Russia's position on the sovereignty of former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, had not changed. "It is well known that not only has Russia supported Ukraine and

other fraternal republics of the former USSR in their quest for sovereignty, but Russia has also contributed significantly to this process at the turn of the 1990s," the president said.

"Every nation has an inalienable right to its own path of development. Russia will always treat this with respect, and this applies to Ukraine too," Putin said. However, the talks about human rights, to cover up the bloody revolution in Ukraine, are nothing but hypocrisy. Putin urged not to conduct political chatter and give empty promises, but to assist the Ukrainian economy. Russia has already credited the Ukrainian economy at 32,5-33,5 billion dollars, Putin reminded.

In his address to the Federal Assembly, Putin accused the United States of putting direct pressure on Russia's neighbors. According to him, Moscow was completely ignored in the discussion of Ukraine's association with the EU. "It is no coincidence that I mention our American friends, as they either directly or from behind the scenes always affect our relations with our neighbors. One does not even know at times, who it is better to talk to - the governments of certain countries or their American patrons and sponsors." Putin stressed out that "in the case of the association agreement between Ukraine and the EU, there was no dialogue conducted at all." "We were told that it was none of our business. Putting it in plain language, we were told where to go," said Putin.

Russia will not blindly follow instructions from the West as far as the Ukrainian crisis is concerned, Putin said. "What is this whole tragedy in Ukraine for? Wasn't it possible to settle all the issues, even controversial ones, in the course of a dialogue, within legal framework and legitimate processes? Yet, they are doing their best now to convince us that it was competent and balanced policy, which we need to obey mindlessly and blindly. This will not happen," said Putin.

Putin about sanctions

Speaking about the topic of Western sanctions against the West, Putin said that the sanctions caused damage "to everyone, including those who imposed them." Talking to Russia from a position of strength is pointless, Putin said. The Russian president assured that despite pressure, Russia would never go the way of self-isolation, nor would it look for enemies.

"This is not just a nervous reaction of the United States or its allies to our position in relation to the events and the coup d'etat in Ukraine; this is not even a reaction to the so-called Crimean spring," Putin said.

If there had been no crisis in Ukraine, if Russia had not reunited with the Crimea, the West would have found other reasons for the isolation of Russia, the Russian president believes. The Russian Federation will be defending diversity of the world - it will be defending truth not to let others distort its image in the world, Putin said.

"We will never take the path of self-isolation, xenophobia, suspicion and search for enemies. This is a sign of weakness, but we are strong and united," said the president.

"If, for European countries, national pride is a long-forgotten concept and if sovereignty is too much of a luxury for them, then for Russia, real state sovereignty is a mandatory condition of its existence. We can either be sovereign, or we can get lost in the world," Putin stated.

About Russia's attitude to new arms race

Russia will not get involved in an arms race, but it will find non-standard solutions to ensure its defensive capability, Putin said. "We do not intend to get involved in a costly arms race, but we will ensure and guarantee the defense of our country in a new environment," Vladimir Putin said. "There are no doubts about it, it will be done. Russia has both opportunities and innovative solutions for that," he said.

Vladimir Putin warned, however, that "no one will succeed in achieving military superiority over Russia." "Our army is modern and combat-ready. As they say, it is polite, but formidable. We will have enough strength, will and courage to defend our freedom," the Russian president said.

According to Vladimir Putin, USA's efforts in the creation of the missile defense system is a threat to Russia's security. "Since 2002, after the USA's unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, which was an absolute cornerstone of international security and strategic balance of power and stability, the United States continues the persistent work to create a global missile defense system, including in Europe," said Putin.

"This is not only a threat to Russia's security, but also a threat to the whole world just because of a possible violation of the strategic balance of forces. I think that it's harmful for the USA itself, because it creates a dangerous illusion of invulnerability, strengthens the pursuit of one-sided and, as we can see, unthoughtful decisions and additional risks."

About Russia's future relations with Europe and the USA

According to the Russian president, even in light of current circumstances, Russia is not going to curtail relations with Europe and America. Russia will be open to the world, to foreign investment and joint projects.

"We, under no circumstances, are going to curtail our relationships with Europe and America, but we will restore and expand our traditional ties with the South American continent, we will continue cooperation with Africa, with the Middle East," said Putin.

Russia will be expanding its presence in the regions, where integration processes are gaining momentum now, "where they do not mix politics and economy, but, vice versa, where they remove barriers for trade, technology exchange and investment for the free movement of people," Putin said.

In particular, Putin pointed to the rapid development of the Asia-Pacific region. The Russian Federation has been strengthening cooperation with China lately. "Russia as a Pacific power will take full advantage of this huge potential. The leaders and engines of global economic

development are well known. Many of them are our true friends or strategic partners," said the Russian president.

Putin also said that January 1, 2015 will be the day when the Eurasian Economic Union starts working at full swing. According to the Russian president, basic principles of association are equality, pragmatism and mutual respect, preservation of national identity and national sovereignty of all member countries. "I am convinced that close cooperation will be a powerful source of development for all members of the Eurasian Union," said the president.

About Russia's development in the future

Speaking about the development of Russia in the future, Putin stated that one must escape from the trap of zero growth and reach the growth of economy higher than the average.

The Russian president also said that prosperity and well-being of Russia depended on its citizens. According to the president, one needs to get rid of indiscipline and irresponsibility, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

"We must understand that our development depends primarily on us. We will succeed if we earn well-being and prosperity ourselves, without relying on good luck or external environment, if we cope with the lack of organization and irresponsibility, if we cope with the habit of "digging into papers," Putin said.

"I want us all to understand that in the current environment, this is not just a brake on the development of Russia, but also a direct threat to its security," said the Russian president. "Ahead of us, we have difficult, stressful times, and much depends on each of us and our actions," he added.

About basic principles of Russian authorities

Vladimir Putin formulated basic principles of the Russian authorities: "Healthy family and healthy nation, traditional values inherited from our ancestors, combined with forward-looking and stability as a condition of development and progress, respect for other peoples and nations while guaranteeing the security of Russia and defending its legitimate interests - these are our priorities," Vladimir Putin said.

About the plummeting Russian ruble

Vladimir Putin commented on the speedily devaluation of the Russian ruble. "Today, we face decreasing foreign currency earnings and, as a consequence, the weakening of the national currency - the ruble. You know that the Bank of Russia proceeded to the "floating" exchange rate, but it does not mean that the Bank of Russia removed itself from showing influence on the exchange rate. It does not mean that the ruble exchange rate may easily become an object of financial speculation," said the Russian president.

"I ask the Bank of Russia and the government to carry out tough, coordinated action to discourage so-called speculators from playing on the fluctuations of the Russian currency," he said.

"The authorities know who these speculators are and they have tools of showing influence on them. It is now time to take advantage of these tools," Putin stated.

About small business

"One must remove restrictions from business to the uttermost and relieve business from obsessive supervision and control," said Putin.

"Next year, a special register will open. It will contain information on what body and for what purpose initiated an inspection and which results were obtained. This will cut unmotivated visits of inspectors. I should add that this problem is relevant not urgent only for businesses, but also for budget, local institutions and social NGOs," said the Russian president, adding that it was necessary to abandon the principle of total, infinite control.

"As for small business, I propose to establish "supervisory holidays" for it. If a company has earned a solid reputation and has not had significant complaints during three years of work, then during the following three years such a company shall be exempt from routine inspections of state and municipal control," said Putin.

About state-run companies

According to the Russian president, the budgets of state-run companies must be put in order. There will be settlement centers established in such companies to ensure "transparency and optimization of cash flows, as well as their effective management."

"Head companies should also clearly see, how the funds are used in their affiliated structures," said Putin.

"I'd like to note that remuneration for management of state companies should be directly related to achieved results and economic realities," said the president.

About demography and health care system

Vladimir Putin said that in the past two years, Russia has seen a natural increase of the population. "In the early 2000s, UN experts predicted a demographic decline in Russia. According to UN forecasts, the population of our country was to reduce to 136 million people by the end of 2013. As of 1 January 2014, the population of Russia amounted to almost 144 million people, which was 8 million more than the UN forecast," Vladimir Putin said.

"In 2013 and 2014, Russia has seen the natural growth of the population. It is expected that by the end of 2014, taking into account the Crimea and Sevastopol, Russia's population will exceed 146 million people," said the Russian president.

In Putin's view, population programs have proven effective. They will apply to residents of the Crimean peninsula. "Families of residents of the Crimea and Sevastopol, beginning from 2007, that had a second or subsequent child, will receive the maternity capital fully," Putin said.

"This year, in the global ranking of healthcare, Russia was for the first time recognized a safe country. This is a state where average life expectancy exceeds 70 years. At the moment, this indicator in Russia exceeded 71 years. I believe that we have every reason to increase average life expectancy to 74 years in the near future," said Putin.

"With regard to the health care system, during the next year, one should finish the transition to insurance principles, set all mechanisms in order to avoid failures. We have long talked about it, we've been doing that, but in reality, medical insurance does not work. It is important the work of health insurance principles be understandable to both citizens and medical personnel," said the president.

"Despite all technical innovations in medicine, personal qualities of a doctor have always been most valuable. It goes about attention to people, nobility and execution of professional and moral duty. Our health care system lives owing to such professionals. And we must create all conditions for their decent work," concluded Putin.

In the Grand Kremlin Palace, about 1,100 people gathered to listen to Putin's Address to the Federal Assembly: members of the Federation Council and the Cabinet of Ministers, State Duma deputies, heads of Constitutional and Supreme Courts, governors, speakers of regional legislatures, heads of traditional religions, public figures, heads of major media outlets.