

*Council of Europe*  
*The Secretary General*

Strasbourg, 24 February 2016

Dear Minister,

Twenty years ago, on 28 February 1996, the Russian Federation became the 39th member state of the Council of Europe. It was an important milestone in the Pan-European outreach of our Organisation.

Over the years Russia has played a vital role in shaping Council of Europe responses to new realities on the continent, not least during your country's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in 2006, and as one of the Organisation's six biggest financial contributors.

Thanks to our mutual efforts, important progress has been made in order to anchor Council of Europe norms, standards and practices within the domestic legal system in the Russian Federation. This includes, of course, the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights, and also around a further sixty Council of Europe legal instruments. Their implementation has paved the way for a number of welcome judicial and legal reforms. The incorporation of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights into domestic courts' practices has also been beneficial for the Russian people. Through our continued co-operation, there is strong potential to build on these efforts.

Where difficult issues and points of disagreement arise, it is my strong view that we should remain frank, open and committed to one and other. Such issues exist, for instance with regard to legislation that affects NGOs which are so crucial to our democracies. My hope is that we will be able to build on the last 20 years of co-operation and find agreeable solutions.

/...

Mr Sergey Lavrov  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of the Russian Federation

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Today European stability faces many threats. It is imperative that we work together to protect and advance our shared standards and common laws, as a basis for dialogue and action between European states. Upholding the rule of law and human rights is fundamental for Europe's security.

The Council of Europe remains a crucial pan-European platform for dialogue and enhanced co-operation and the Russian Federation is an indispensable member of this community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish at the end.

Thorbjørn Jagland

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