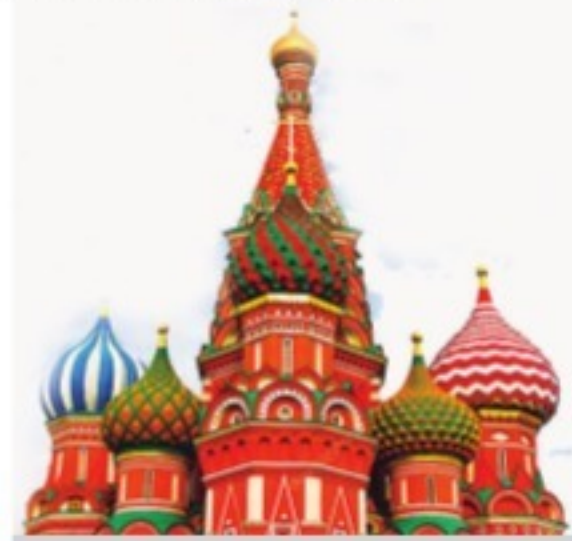


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Russia

5th Anniversary of Crimea's unification with the Russian Federation

M E S S A G E
H.E. MR NIKOLAY KUDASHEV
AMBASSADOR OF RUSSIA TO INDIA



Dear friends,

March 18 has become a significant date in the modern history of Russia marking the rightful unification of the Crimean peninsula with the Russian Federation. Five years have passed since the people of Crimea exercised their right to self-determination guaranteed by the UN Charter and convincingly voted in favor of homecoming. The change in Crimea's political and legal status was introduced in strict compliance with international law and current practices, unlike the case of Kosovo, for example. Therefore it is surprising to hear, especially on the eve of the 20th anniversary of Yugoslavia's bombardment by NATO in 1999, criticism from those who were directly indulging in aggressive and unprincipled politics back then. Those irresponsible actions were a prelude to tragic misadventures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Today, Crimea is fully integrated into the political, social and economic space of Russia, with its legislation put in conformity with federal laws and legal practices. The federal program for social and economic development of the peninsula has been in place since 2015 and aims at addressing imbalances in regional development, upgrading living standards, settling inter-ethnic relations, promoting tourism and recreational facilities, enhancing infrastructure and connectivity with mainland Russia. Federal and regional authorities pay special attention to its work on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and protecting religious liberties of every national minority in Crimea.

There is a free economic zone in Crimea that has already attracted investments for 2.4 billion dollars split between 184 projects in agriculture, transport, industrial facilities and tourism, which will result in creating 14 thousand jobs. The Yalta International Economic Forum held annually in April, has become a convenient platform for an



increasing number of foreign business delegations willing to explore the vast potential of the peninsula across many sectors. This year, the Forum will focus on such issues, as mastering tools of digital economy, international cooperation for territorial development, investment in high-tech industries, preservation of cultural heritage, environment protection, etc.

After the energy blockade imposed on the peninsula by Ukraine, massive efforts have been made to ensure energy security and independence of Crimea, with two new high capacity thermal power plants have been put into operation. The modernized Saksakaya gas-powered plant with additional capacity of 120 MW consists entirely of domestically produced equipment. There are also plans to develop the renewable sources with focus on solar and wind energy as the nature generously provides for the same.

Reliable and uninterrupted water supply is another regional issue, which was brought to the fore by the water blockade imposed by Kiev in 2014, when many locations in Crimea were deprived of this essential commodity. It prompted the Crimean authorities to implement dozens of strategic projects, including construction of new water pipelines and drilling of new wells, which have stabilized the situation.

The main cargo flow, including food and medicines, primarily comes through the Kerch Strait ferry line, while the demand for passenger transportation is largely met by the aviation service. In 2018, the Simferopol International Airport became operational accommodating up to 7 million people annually.

The 19 kilometer long Crimean Bridge — one of the real wonders of the world — opened for road traffic in May 2018, has become a game-changer for the social and economic development of the region. The 250 kilometers long four-lane federal highway "Tavrida" stretching across the entire peninsula from east to west, from Kerch to Simferopol and then to Sevastopol, with the upcoming regular railway service through the transport passage across the Kerch Strait once completed will enormously benefit regional connectivity.

The tourist flow to Crimea reached 6.5 million people in 2018, with Russian holidaymakers making up to 85% of the total number. It is one of the most beautiful locations in Eastern Europe, both in architecture and natural wonders. Crimea features many landscapes, from prairies and sandy beaches to forested mountain ranges with fabled caves and waterfalls. The rich heritage left from the Greek and Roman periods, from Imperial Russia and the Soviet era, offers memorable and rewarding experience.

We welcome everybody to see Crimea with their own eyes, to benefit from vast economic opportunities and incentives offered by the local authorities, to immerse in the natural beauty of the peninsula, to learn about its colorful history and acquire experience to last a lifetime.



Crimea's Reunification With Russia

Today marks five years since Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Crimean leadership signed an agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea to Russia

ON FEBRUARY 22, 2014, there was a power shift in Ukraine that had the attributes of a coup d'etat. The Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, ousted then president Viktor Yanukovich from power, changed the Constitution, and set new presidential elections for May 25.

On February 23, 2014, a Verkhovna Rada resolution appointed speaker Oleksandr Turchynov as acting president.

The coup and the rise to power of a new anti-Russia government, triggered rallies in cities in Ukraine's south and south-east in defense of the Russian-speaking population, with many waving Russian flags. In Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the rallies evolved into a strong pro-Russian movement.

On February 23, 2014, over 20,000 people gathered on Nakhimov Square in downtown Sevastopol for the 'People's Will' rally. The participants expressed their mistrust of the authorities and Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada. The city's residents unanimously voted for businessman Alexei Chaly to become the city's new mayor.

The following day, Volodymyr Yatsuba, head of Sevastopol's city administration, announced his resignation.

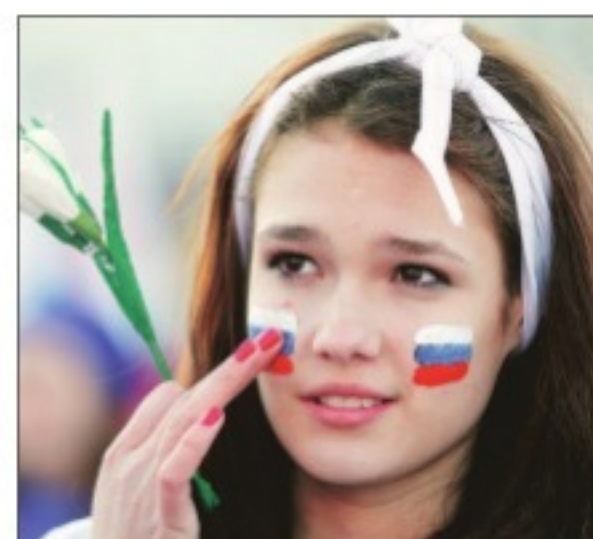
The city council voted for the creation of an executive committee headed by Alexei Chaly. Since February 24, 2014, the city residents have been holding rallies in the city center in support of Chaly. Ukrainian military units have also been picketed with appeals not to turn weapons on the people.

On February 25, 2014, pro-Russian Crimean residents launched an open-ended rally outside the Supreme Council building demanding that legislators not recognize the new leadership that had come to power after unrest in Kiev.

The participants of the rally also called



'People's Will' rally in Sevastopol on February 23, 2014



for the restoration of the 1992 Crimean Constitution according to which the republic should have its own president and independent foreign policy. The protesters also called for a referendum for Crimean residents to be able to choose the direction of the region's further development, either as an autonomous republic within Ukraine, or as an independent state, or as

part of Russia.

On February 26, 2014, Crimean Tatars who supported the regime change in Ukraine also gathered outside the parliament. The two groups clashed, which resulted in 35 people being injured.

In the early hours of February 27, 2014, the Russian-speaking population's self-defense forces occupied the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea.

On February 27, 2014, the Supreme Council of Crimea appointed Sergei Aksyonov, leader of the Russian Unity Party, prime minister.

The Crimean Supreme Council called for a referendum on expanding the powers of the autonomous republic to be held on May 25, 2014. The referendum was to include one question: "Do you support the state self-determination of Crimea as part of Ukraine on the basis of international

treaties and agreements?"

The Crimean Supreme Council dismissed the government of the autonomous republic, and on February 28, 2014, a new Cabinet of Ministers was formed.

On March 1, 2014, unidentified armed individuals attempted to seize the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea.

On March 1, 2014, Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov said at the new Cabinet's first meeting that he had decided to appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin for help in maintaining the lawful constitutional order in Crimea.

On the same day, Putin addressed Russia's Council of the Federation for authorization to use Russian military forces on Ukrainian soil in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, until the social and political situation in the country normalized. The initiative was unanimously supported, and the authorization came into force.

The Crimean authorities also decided to speed up the referendum and set it for March 30, 2014.

On March 6, 2014, the Crimean parliament voted for the autonomous republic's reunification with Russia. The referendum date was moved to March 16, 2014. Crimean residents were asked two questions at the referendum: "Do you support the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation?" and "Do you support the restoration of the 1992 Constitution of Crimea and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine?"

On March 17, the Supreme Council of Crimea on the basis of the referendum results passed a resolution on the independence from Ukraine. The Crimean parliament also made a proposal to Moscow on the accession of Crimea to Russia.

The Republic of Crimea

CRIMEA is an ancient land of the Cimmerians, Hellenes, Scythians, and Tatars. It is the homeland of Achilles, the hero of the Trojan War. According to legend, Dionysus taught mortals here how to grow grapes and make wine. Archaeological monuments describe the history of Crimea from primitive people to today. Crimea has always attracted people for health reasons; the combination of mountain, sea, and air, and the relict juniper groves invigorate without any medical procedures.

Simferopol is the capital of Crimea, the business and cultural center of the peninsula and is called the city of three capitals. The late-Scythian center of Scythian Neapolis was built here in the 3rd century BC. Its ruins can be found in the Petrovsky Heights. Colorful historic costume festivals celebrating ancient culture and life are held here every year. Simferopol has lots of museums, Christian Orthodox and Islamic temples, but most of all it has squares and parks.

Kerch is the sea gate of Crimea. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, just one year younger than ancient Rome. Its history is told by the hot stones of the capital of the Bosphoran Kingdom Panticapaeum, Ytritake, Nymphaeum and the small Myrmekion, the birthplace of Achilles (if we believe the



Byzantine historian Leo the Deacon). The city was built on Mount Mithridat, named after Mithridates VI of Pontus who ruled Bosphoran Kingdom more than 2,000 years ago.

Feodosia is renowned for its endless sandy beaches, the ancient Genoese fortress and the world-famous Aivazovsky Art Gallery.

Koktebel is a picturesque corner of Crimea loved by Russian bohemians who would stay in the house of Maximilian Voloshin. This house became the heart of Russian creativity. The poet Marina Tsvetaeva was one of Voloshin's regular guest. She met her future husband, Sergei Efron, in Koktebel.

Not far from Koktebel, you can find Mount Klementyeva, the famous gliding center.

Sudak, the western capital of Silk Route, is

a rich market town that has witnessed many historic upheavals. The heavy stones of the Genoese fortress preserve the centuries old memories of Greek and Italian rule, of brave Slavs, and terrifying Turkish raids.

Yalta was the favorite town of the Romanov royal family. The palaces of kings and princes along the south coast are an exquisite pearl on the imperial crown. The climate here is very similar to the climate in the resorts of Italy and southern France where people successfully cured tuberculosis. The town is full of Chekhov romanticism: if you take a stroll along the embankment, you can imagine a sophisticated lady in a vanilla-colored long dress walking along with her dog. Lake Saky is a source of therapeutic mud and salt water. Saky mud treats musculoskeletal disorders and is successfully used in gynecology, urology, neurology, and even cosmetology.

Bakhchisaray Palace is a unique eastern architectural monument from the Middle Ages, the only example of Crimean Tatar palace architecture. The palace contains the Fountain of Tears, described in poetry by Alexander Pushkin—a silent memorial to Qirim Giray Khan's eternal love for his wife and his grief after her death.

French lawmaker praises 'breakthrough'

Thierry Mariani, the head of the Franco-Russian Dialogue Association and the leader of the French delegation that is currently on a visit to Russia's Crimea, praised the development that the peninsula has seen over the past several years.

Mariani recalled that he had headed a group on French-Ukrainian friendship from 2002 to 2007. He stressed that until 2014, when the peninsula rejoined Russia, "no development could be seen," and Crimea was considered a "territory submerged in eternal sleep."

When asked to comment on the fact that several members of the delegation had lost their posts in France over voicing support to Crimea's reunification with Russia, Mariani said that one should be able to risk to "vindicate one's convictions."

Mariani has already headed two French delegations that visited Russia in 2015 and 2016.

The French delegation includes honorary members of the country's parliament and representatives of French municipal authorities. Its visit, dated to the fifth anniversary of the peninsula's reunification with Russia, will include meetings with Crimean authorities and members of youth parliament. French visitors will also attend a French military cemetery in Crimea.

Crimea rejoined Russia in March 2014, after 97 per cent of people voted for the reunification in a referendum. Ukraine and the majority of Western countries, including France, continue to consider Crimea as a Ukrainian territory.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the issue of Crimea's territorial belonging is "historically closed", since Crimean joined Russia.

Major boost for agriculture

Agricultural production in Russia's Crimea is set to rise by at least 10 percent this year with the help of government investments. Output will grow to 58 billion rubles (shy of \$1 billion), which corresponds to a 10 percent growth year-on-year, according to Minister of Agriculture of the Republic Andrey Ryumshin. Since becoming part of the Russian Federation in 2014, Crimea's agriculture has grown by almost a quarter. According to Ryumshin, in 2012-2013, Ukraine invested 113.6 million hryvnia (about \$8 million) in Crimea's agricultural sector. "For comparison, after reunification with Russia - for 2014-2017 — the amount of state support exceeded 7.2 billion rubles (about \$120 million)," he said. Russian state support allows Crimea to



Barley harvesting, Crimea

deal with Western sanctions and Ukraine's water blockade. In 2014, Ukraine reduced the water flowing into Crimea. Kiev's decision to blackmail Crimea with water has backfired, former Ukrainian MP Vadym Kolesnichenko said. According to him, the peninsula has managed to provide itself with water, while some arid parts of Ukraine are suffering from drought. Crimea produces 1.4 million tons of grain a year — around a million tons of which is exported despite sanctions.

The bridge linking Russia and Crimea

The new bridge link connecting mainland Russia and the Crimean Peninsula is proving to be a huge hit with Russian drivers.

The Crimean Bridge has broken another single-day record for car traffic, with 32,000 vehicles crossing the span on Sunday. About 1.6 million cars have crossed the bridge since it opened in May. This is 20 percent higher than vehicle transport using the Kerch ferry, which had been the only way to get to the peninsula from Russia by car.

Currently, the bridge is open for cars only, but freight transport will start this fall. The railway section of the Crimean Bridge is scheduled to be completed next year.

Summer is usually the peak period for the Crimean penin-



sula as tourists from all across Russia and neighboring states go there on holiday. Crimea expects as many as six million tourists this year.

As traffic across the bridge grows, the Russian government is considering building a highway and tunnel system across the Crimean Peninsula linked to the new crossing. The largest metro construction firm in the country, Mosmetrostroy, is looking to build a tunnel in Crimea which would resemble Moscow's ring-road. The new highway will speed up traffic across the Crimean Bridge.