

My dear friends!

I am happy to see you all here once again. Some of you are participating in our meeting for the first time, some have been present before. We will proceed with the traditional schedule of our meeting, because any support, even of a minimal nature, to the further development of the European University at St. Petersburg, for its basic directions and its programs, is very dear to us. We thank you for this.

Today we are taking part in our Sixth Meeting of Friends and Trustees. At the very same time, in another part of this building, another important meeting is taking part. Several important sponsors of science and education are attending this other meeting; in particular, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of AFC “Sistema,” Mr. Evtushenkov, and also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of “Renaissance Capital,” Mr. Igor Kamenskoy. We hope that they will be able to join us shortly.

We have gathered here today to summarize what has been achieved by the University to date, and to share with you our thoughts on how we can continue our development in the most effective manner and in the most prospective directions.

Rector Oleg Kharkhordin will tell you about EUSP’s recent achievements. Following this, there will be short presentations about the activities of two important research centers of the University – the Center for Modernization Studies (the M-Center), and the Center for European Studies.

Then the Vice-Rector for Development will discuss directions of support, which could create new “growth spurts” for EUSP. And, concluding the official part, we will with pleasure offer our guests the opportunity to express their opinions, ask questions, make announcements, concerning cooperative efforts with EUSP. Some informal communication will conclude our meeting.

In my welcoming remarks I would like to address some aspects that make the European University at St. Petersburg such a unique institution and enable it to play a special role in the Russian educational system.

During the past several years the question why Russian institutions of higher learning are ranked so low in international rating schedules and what can be done in order to improve this situation has become a serious concern. It is no secret, that the complex solution of the problems with the Russian educational system will demand both time and a systematic approach. Much is already being done about this problem, at various levels of the government, and also by the universities themselves. It is understood that this is a long and complicated process. However, in one particular successful educational institution, there is the possibility to

quickly and substantially influence the present state of affairs. And we make such ambitious goals for ourselves.

Without concerning ourselves about the various methods of rating universities, I would just like to mention that in general, the main criteria for their compilation are a quotation index, the ratio of professors to students, and also the popularity of a particular university with foreign students. It is leadership within these parameters that has enabled a young and dynamic university such as EUSP to be mentioned in several important, specialized rating systems. For example, EUSP is the only Russian university to be included in the London School of Economics rating of “100 best European centers for political science.” The complete rating scale can be seen on the banner in this hall.

Both the quotation index and the professor to student ratio, as well as the popularity with foreign students, are all directly dependent on the status and the notoriety of the professors hired. Of course, those hired from the international educational market. And this simple step, a very directional approach to the hiring of new internationally renowned staff, will allow a rather small, dynamic, but already possessing a solid reputation in scientific research, institution, to compete on an equal level with world universities.

One can almost equal the creation of a unique university community to the creation of, as our colleagues at EUSP propose, a St. Petersburg Zenith in the social sciences. It is our wish that our team be just as famous in the world, and play with other teams, of equal caliber. A serious professorial staff will enable EUSP to succeed in the scientific battles on the pages of the largest scientific journals, and to win the love and admiration of its fans, the possible future students of EUSP.

I should like to quote Professor Philip Altbach of Boston University, one of the world's authorities in the area of comparative study on the strategies of the universities in developing countries: “Ratings usually examine the basic research activities of a university, which is easiest to measure, to physically count. If a university has a Nobel Laureate on staff, then the educational institution is automatically on the higher levels of a rating.”

That is why we are most grateful to our donors, who have already established three and five year named professor positions, and thus have enabled the newly hired professors to have competitive salaries. We sincerely hope that this tradition will be continued by our new partners. It is also planned to establish the Chairs, financed directly through a special part of the university's endowment. You will learn more about this later from the Vice-Rector for Development.

I would only like to add that just two days ago I was talking to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Rashid Nurgaliev, about the forthcoming new legislation on

police. This is a very important document, and it would be desirable to tie it to the improvement of the nation's educational institutions. Maybe this law will require additional development. But, as EUSP's Professor Volkov just told me, a lot of the work that was performed at the European University was very much in demand during the discussions of this law, and many of the University's recommendations were taking into account. Maybe further cooperative efforts of the University and the federal government are a possible area of development. As you can see, actual day-to-day issues are under review by the University community. Today we will also hear an accounting about financial matters. In this area the University has also made great strides.

And now, I pass the floor to Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky. Thank you.