

**Tatyana Golikova spoke at the First Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for social cohesion**

26 February

**Main points of the speech by the Minister of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation, Tatyana Golikova, at the opening of the First Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for social cohesion**  
(Moscow, 26 February 2009)

Conference participants and guests,

I fully subscribe to the views of the representatives of the Council of Europe on the important role to be played by social cohesion in European societies in the context of globalisation and economic crisis.

It is the first time in the 60 years of the Council of Europe's existence that its member States have faced difficulties on such a scale.

The financial crisis and the collapse of production have inflicted material losses on great swathes of our countries' populations, engendering mistrust of the existing financial and economic mechanisms among many population groups. Social cohesion now faces new challenges and new threats.

As the heads of social affairs ministries, we have a difficult problem to resolve here. On the one hand we must cushion the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable population groups and on the other hand, in discussions with representatives of the finance and economy ministries, we must defend the level of funding allocated by the State to meeting its social obligations.

The Russian Federation has taken a decision of principle that, even in the current global financial crisis, all the social obligations previously entered into will be properly honoured. The social obligations laid down in the Russian Federation budget will not be subject to restrictions during the financial crisis.

Within the rapid response system, we have adopted special measures to reduce social tension, firstly as regards the worsening job situation. Monitoring of staff redundancies linked to the winding up of enterprises or job-cutting has been organised and is carried out on a weekly basis at the highest level of government. We are keeping a close watch on the transition of a number of companies to a system of reduced working hours.

The Russian Federation has allocated supplementary and very substantial funding to advance professional training in cases where there is a danger of mass redundancies as well as to the creation of temporary jobs, the organisation of community service and the organisation of transportation of redundant employees to work in other locations, if they so wish and agree of course. Special measures are being implemented to develop small business ventures and self-employment of unemployed persons.

The employment situation in the Russian Federation is under supervision, and the rapid response measures are operating effectively enough in most Russian regions.

A central concern for regional authorities is the employment of people on low incomes, as well as unemployment of citizens who, for objective reasons, are unable to properly compete on the labour market.

Even at this awkward time we intend to pursue large-scale reforms in the social sphere.

Efforts are ongoing and will continue with a view to setting up a pensions system for citizens of the Russian Federation, particularly as regards state aid for supplementary pension insurance.

The corresponding law entered into force on 1 October 2008 and, from 1 January 2009 onwards, the State began co-financing the cumulative part of Russian Federation citizens' retirement pensions. Part of the contributions to the cumulative component of the future pension is paid by the citizen and the other part is paid by the State (to the tune of 12,000 roubles a year). A third party to co-financing can be the employer, who receives tax breaks in return. Five months after the introduction of this law, the rights enshrined in it have already been enjoyed by over one million Russian citizens.

We are continuing to improve and develop the state system of material support for young families with two or more children. This year, families having taken on mortgages to purchase a home have been allowed to use the so-called parental family capital (300,000 roubles) to pay off their mortgage debt. The federal budget has earmarked substantial funding of up to 26 billion roubles (which is about 580 million euros) for this purpose.

There will also be serious reforms carried out in the health sector. In the current year it is planned to adopt the Blueprint for developing health protection for the period up to 2020. The objective set is to substantially improve the quality of medical services and to make medical assistance more accessible to all population groups without exception.

One key health strategy will be establishing a healthy lifestyle and educating each and every citizen about the need to consolidate their health and the health of their children.

Efforts will focus first and foremost on overcoming harmful habits (drinking alcohol and smoking), developing a system of physical culture and well-being, and substantially improving work safety and health protection in the workplace.

This will be the aim of the large-scale organisational, structural and financial and economic reforms to be carried out in Russia's health sector.

Despite the financial crisis, the funding for the programme of state guarantees in 2009 is nearly twice the level of 2008 funding. Absolutely every layer of society, including representatives of business, public and non-governmental institutions, is engaged in efforts to resolve the problems arising from the financial crisis.

At this stage it is particularly important that the social partnership machinery now up and running does not malfunction. Listening to and understanding one another and finding compromises and mutually acceptable solutions is a fundamental task of social dialogue.

The process of globalisation, where the trend is one of national economies converging into a unified, worldwide system, is becoming ever more ensconced in the countries of Europe, and this situation is forcing us to make certain adjustments to social policy too.

It is becoming clear that the member countries of the Council of Europe need to devise and take on board a unified line of thought for resolving social problems. This is important for working out and adopting precisely calculated and unequivocally correct decisions.

I am convinced that we will hear some new ideas at this Conference, yielded by the individual experience of each European State. It is important that those ideas are translated into concrete state and possibly even inter-state programmes to develop and strengthen social cohesion in our countries.

Our task today is to minimise the social impact of the financial crisis and avoid any kind of social upheavals in the future.

Thank you.