

*DMITRY MEDVEDEV SENT A GREETING TO PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL COHESION  
26 февраля 2009*

The following information was released by the office of the President of Russia:

"Russia has traditionally paid a great deal of attention to education, health care, pensions and other social issues," the President of Russia said in his message. "In recent years we have begun to implement plans for long-term social and economic development, including the priority national projects, which are vitally important for our people. They are aimed at strengthening the guarantees affecting the social rights of citizens and bringing our social sphere up to international standards. We are always open to a very close dialogue with the Council of Europe, with a view to strengthening its role as a reliable mechanism for pan-European cooperation in areas directly affecting millions of people on our continent.

You are about to conduct a comprehensive examination of the opportunities that in the context of the global economic crisis could provide the residents of our countries with the inalienable right to a decent life. I am confident that the recommendations made at the conference will be extremely useful to the heads of 47 member states of the Council of Europe. They will help us join forces to build the new economy of the 21st century, which will require a shared responsibility and an appropriate contribution from each of the participants in social and economic activities, with a necessary provision of social guarantees appropriate in this time of crisis. Of course I expect that the practical results of your deliberations will contribute to the process of preparing effective decisions for the G20 summit in London."

The President wished the participants of the conference fruitful work and success.

Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov read out Dmitry Medevdev's greetings.

The first Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion, "Investing in social cohesion: investing in stability and the well-being of society," is taking place 26-27 February in Moscow.