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Strategy of the Italian Republic in the Arctic



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Abstract. This article is devoted to analysis of the interests of the Italian Republic in the Arctic. Despite the geographical distance Italy from the Arctic, the interest of Italians to the Arctic cooperation is due to historical reasons: Italians participated in the study of the Arctic since the end of the XIX century. That's scientific achievements in the field of Arctic studies have provided Italy's place in the "Arctic Club of non-Arctic countries". In 2013, Italy became

an observer in the Arctic Council, and in 2016 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented the document "Towards the Italian strategy for the Arctic", which shows the country's interests in the region to address climate change, the development of scientific co-operation and economic development of the region the participation of leading Italian companies. Thus, Italy marked the importance of the Arctic in the direction of its policy. Russia is one of the most important Italian partners in Arctic affairs. As economic interests are a priority for both sides, the main bilateral cooperation projects are focused on energy and transport.

Keywords: *Arctic, Italy, the strategy, the interests of the Arctic Council, the Permanent Observer, international cooperation, the European Union, Russia*

Strategy of the Italian Republic in the Arctic

Modern foreign policy of Italy is characterized by a stable tendency to increase its international role and enter the ranks of the powerful states of the world. Italy seeks to emphasize the importance and the contribution it can make to the development of the world community. As a result, in recent decades, Italy's foreign policy is characterized by a significant increase in activity in the international arena. New areas of the foreign policy of Italy have been designated, sometimes even "exotic" for the republic, such as, for example, the Arctic. According to the Italian Ambassador in Norway, J. Novello, remoteness of Italy from the Arctic issues is only a superficial impression¹. Events in the Arctic gain global importance, and his country should not stand on the sidelines from the opportunities and challenges of the region.

The history of the presence of the Italian Republic in the Arctic

Despite the fact that Italy is geographically very far from the Arctic, the interest of Italians to the Arctic cooperation is stipulated by the historical reasons: Italians participated in the study of the Arctic starting from the end of XIX century. At the end of the XIX century, on the initiative of Luigi Amedeo (Prince of Savoy and the Duke of Abruzzi), the first Italian expedition to the Arctic was organized. Indeed, the expedition on the steam whale ship "Polar Star" (Stella Polare) was organized in 1899 and started in Arkhangelsk. The Arctic expeditions with the participation of the

¹ Nearkticheskie strany proivavliaut interes k Arktike. 21.01.2014. URL: <http://www.arctic-info.ru/news/21-01-2014/nearkticheskie-strani-proavlaut-interes-k-arktike> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

Italian explorer Umberto Nobile were organized in 1926 and 1928. Assessing the contribution of L. Amadeo and U. Nobile in Italian history, the Italian diplomat, special representative of Italy on the Arctic issues, Marco Toretto writes that "Nobile entered Italy in the new world that was practically unknown for the Mediterranean country", thanks to L. Amadeo and U. Nobile "Italy has found its "Northern dimension"[1, p. 11]. In the second half of the XX century Italy actively participated in the research of two poles and in many respects this period of Italian activity in the Arctic and Antarctic is associated with the name of Silvio Zavatti — the Italian explorer, politician and anthropologist. The foundation of the Institute of Polar Research in Fermo (Istituto Geografico Polare "Silvio Zavatti") by S. Zavatti in 1944 became an important event in the development of the Italian Arctic research, this Institute is still the only one in Italy involved in polar research. The main task of the Institute was to spread the knowledge about the Arctic and Antarctic in Italy and abroad. Since 1945, the Institute publishes the scientific journal «Pole» (Il Polo), which publishes articles in Italian and English, devoted to various aspects of polar research. The unique library for Italy was created in this Institute — it is documentation centre, in which research material on polar issues are presented, as well as a collection of periodicals from around the world dedicated to polar issues. In addition to the library, one more unique place for Italy was created in this Institute — the Polar Museum, in which exhibits collected in the course of the Italian polar expeditions are presented.

Italy has become the one of the leading non-Arctic countries in the field of scientific research of the Arctic region. The Council of National Research (CNR) of Italy plays the central role here, it began its work in the Arctic on Norwegian territory in the late 1990s. And then other Italian research institutions have opened their representative offices in various regions of the Arctic. The Italian Arctic Station Dirigibile Italia (named after the expedition of U. Nobile in 1928), was founded in 1997, which is an interdisciplinary research center and is located in Ny-Alesund on the Norwegian territory of Svalbard². The station is operated by Council of National Research of Italy, and its activities are coordinated by the Environmental Department of the Council (POLARNET). The greater part of the research in the Arctic region of Italy is carried out here.

Italy in the modern Arctic: political dimension

Italy today is one of the European Non-Arctic countries, received the status of permanent observer in the Arctic Council (since 2013). On the one hand, it's unconditional recognition of the Italian merits in the Arctic research, and on the other — it is a new responsibility, providing further

² Lagutina M.L. Interesy Italii v Arktike. URL: <http://en.instituteofeurope.ru/images/uploads/doklad/316.pdf> (accessed: 09.07.2016).

strengthening of its activities in the region. According to the famous Italian politician Franco Frattini, Italy's role in the Arctic Council is the role of mediator between the small Arctic European countries (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) and the Arctic giants as Russia, USA, Canada³. As the observer country of the AC, Italy formally did not receive the right to vote on the Arctic issues, therefore, Italy did not get any opportunity to realize their political ambitions in the region, but in the economic and scientific spheres of cooperation in the Arctic, the Italian Republic has a fairly strong position. Thus, despite the fall of the world oil prices and the withdrawal of the majority of energy companies from the Arctic, the Italian ENI intends to continue in cooperation with the Norwegian company Statoil, the development of the oil and gas fields, and the northernmost offshore oil field, which will be operated in the area of Goliat⁴. After obtaining the observer status in the AC, Italian Foreign Ministry has started actively participate in the Arctic affairs. At the end of 2015 Italian Foreign Ministry published on its website the document "Towards the Italian strategy for the Arctic. National priorities"⁵. The document was prepared jointly with the Ministry of Environment of Italy and the Ministry of Economic Development. The text provides historical background and purposes of modern Italy's presence in the Arctic. According to the document, the Italian activities in the Arctic is carried out in the so-called "five dimensions": 1) political, 2) environmental, 3) social-humanitarian (human), 4) scientific 5) economic⁶. This document is not a formal strategy for Italy in the Arctic yet, but it can be treated as an application for the formulation of strategic interests in the Arctic in the future, it follows from the very title of the document. In addition, the publication of this document also shows that Italy is in solidarity with other non-Arctic countries (eg, Germany, Japan, South Korea), which also presented their policy statements with regard to their vision of Arctic policy, to the world community.

According to the document, at this stage, Italy aims to consolidate its position in the Arctic Council, which is regarded as the leading forum for discussion in the region. Italy participates in the work of the Arctic Council at all levels: from the Task Forces to Working Groups, where it has the ability to make a significant contribution to the development of various areas of cooperation. For example, Italy regularly participates in the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), in the activities of the working groups of the AC, such as the Working Group of the Advanced Modular Armor Protection (the AMAP) and the

³ L'Artico, l'Europa e l'Italia. Parla Frattini. URL: <http://formiche.net/2016/02/26/artico-italia-frattini/> (accessed: 30 June 2016)

⁴ Sylvers A. Italy's Eni Plans to Pump Arctic Oil, After Others Abandon the Field / The Wall Street Journal. November 23, 2015. URL: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/italys-eni-set-to-begin-arctic-oil-quest-even-as-others-abandon-field-1448274602> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

⁵ Verso una strategia italiana per l'Artico URL: http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/politica_estera/aree_geografiche/europa/artico/ (accessed: 16 June 2016).

⁶ In the same place.

Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME). The document further notes that Italy is a country that has ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS), and has adheres to its provisions, including the responsible management of the Arctic Ocean. Italy is also guided in its strategy for the Arctic by the provisions of other legal instruments that are indirectly related to the Arctic region: The Convention on biological diversity, the Convention on transboundary air pollution, the International convention for the prevention of pollution from ships, the International Convention for the safety of life at Sea. Italy is also one of the first states which signed the treaty on Spitsbergen of 1920. Special attention is paid in the document to the key role of the European Union in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development of the Arctic. Italy consider itself as "conductor" of European interests in the region⁷. Italy received the status of observer in the AC at the time when the European Union, where it is included in, has been refused to get this status, but, like other European observer countries — EU member states (for instance France), it has consistently advocated the importance of the EU's participation in solving of problems of the Arctic region and supports the EU's observer status assignment in 2017.

Italy, as a member of the AC, respects the sovereign rights of the Arctic states and is ready to develop bilateral cooperation with them in various fields: from scientific cooperation to economic cooperation. Embassies of Italy in the Arctic states carry out various activities for the expansion of the Italian presence in the Arctic (in Finland in 2013, in Russia, Canada and Norway in 2014). Italy finds Norway and Russia as its key partners in the region. And informal relations with the Council of the Saami have been established. Italy holds regular informal consultations with other non-Arctic countries (eg, China) on topical issues of regional development.

According to the text of the document, at the national level, the Italian Government intends to continue to support Italian research centers working on Arctic projects, and will enhance the activity of civil society in this area. The leading center of scientific Arctic research in Italy is the Council of the National Research (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR)), which was established already in 1923 and aims to "promote international cooperation of groups of Italian scientists involved in the implementation of the International Polar Year results and the development of the monitoring system the Arctic in accordance with the recommendations of the report "Supporting Arctic observing Networks" (SAON). [1, p. 15]. Research of the Council are carried out on a wide range of issues: climate change, the impact of atmospheric aerosols, the study of atmospheric phenomena. Italian scientists actively cooperate with their coworkers from

⁷ Caruso A. La geopolitica dell'Artico. 16 June 2014. URL: http://italian.ruvr.ru/2014_06_16/La-geo-politica-dell-Artico-2004/ (accessed: 16 June 2016).

other countries (Norway, Germany). At this stage, CNR carries out a large number of projects in the Arctic. In addition to the CNR, following institutions play important role in the Arctic research development: Institute of National Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS), National Meteorological Institute (INRIM), National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF), the universities of Italy (for example, University La Sapienza in Rome, and others)⁸.

Recently in Italy various research activities on Arctic topics at the initiative of various government agencies in Italy are organized and conducted: "In recent years Rome has also sought to science diplomacy, which is a common cornerstone of the Arctic Council observers, giving thus a tribute to previous historical research tasks"⁹. For example, in February 2013 in Rome under the patronage of the Italian Chamber of Deputies the conference "Glaciers and resources: a new geopolitical scenario for the Arctic" was held, directly organized by the Italian Institute of Geopolitical and International Studies (ISAG), headed by Professor Tiberio Graziani¹⁰. The current issues of the Arctic cooperation between the Arctic and non-Arctic countries were discussed at the conference. The conference "Climate Change and future scenarios in the Arctic region" was organized in Venice in December 2014, at the base of the Venice International University under the patronage of the Italian Foreign Ministry. The problems of changes in the Arctic environment and its sustainable development, and the place and the role of indigenous peoples in the changing Arctic were included into agenda of the conference. Heads of consular missions of the Arctic countries in Italy were among the participants of the conference¹¹. It is also important to note that this event took place in the framework of the Italian Presidency in the EU Council in 2014. During its european presidency, Italy identified one of the problems as "stabilizing and strengthening of its observer status in the AC"¹².

Seriousness of the intentions of the Italian Republic in relation to intensify its involvement in the Arctic cooperation is also evidenced by the fact that in 2016 the Italian Society for

⁸ Novello G. at Arctic Circle 2014 "Italy in the Arctic". URL: <http://vimeo.com/111399255> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

⁹ Marc Lanteigne. Arkticheskaia diplomatiia Italii. URL: <http://arcticjournal.com/opinion/2069/past-prologue> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹⁰ Ghiaccio e risorse: l'Artico come nuovo scenario geopolitico. Il 19 febbraio alla Camera. URL: <http://www.geopolitica-rivista.org/25013/ghiaccio-e-risorse-lartico-come-nuovo-scenario-geopolitico-il-19-febbraio-alla-camera/> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹¹ Festival della Diplomazia: al Ministero degli Affari Esteri il dibattito Artico: risorse ed ecosostenibilità Se ne parla con i diplomatici del Canada, Danimarca, Finlandia, Norvegia, Russia, Stati Uniti e Svezia. URL: <http://www.informazione.it/c/7771E1EB-0E64-461C-9177-F374ED172515/Festival-della-Diplomazia-al-Ministero-degli-Affari-Esteri-il-dibattito-Artico-risorse-ed-ecosostenibilitaSe-ne-parla-con-i-diplomatici-del-Canada-Danimarca-Finlandia-Norvegia-Russia-Stati-Uniti-e-Svezia> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹² Caruso A. La geopolitica dell'Artico. 16 июня 2014. URL: http://italian.ruvr.ru/2014_06_16/La-geopolitica-dell-Artico-2004/ (accessed: 16 June 2016).

International Organization (Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale (SIOI) in cooperation with the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Environment will introduce the first Italian master program for Arctic cooperation (master course on sustainable development, energy geopolitics and Arctic research)¹³. Thus, in Italy, in-house specialists on the Arctic issues will be qualified.

Finally, the last level of the Arctic policy of Italy is the level of informal consultations with representatives of business and civil society. The general trend of the modern Arctic cooperation is to attract business to solve the Arctic problems and to develop cooperation in the region. For Italy it is a good opportunity to deepen contacts through business with other Arctic players. In this context it is interesting to mention "the Arctic Desk» held under the patronage of the Italian Foreign Ministry (Tavolo Artico), which at the national level is a series of informal events to exchange views with representatives of the Italian business and civil society. Italy is actively involved at the state and non-governmental levels in the informal activities of regional organizations, for instance, in conference "Arctic Circle" and "Arctic Frontiers".

Italy and Russia in the Arctic: problems and prospects of cooperation

As already noted, one of the main Italian partners in the Arctic, with which bilateral relations on the topical issues of the region have been already established, is of course, the Russian Federation. In turn, Italy is one of the most important strategic partners of Russia in today's Europe, with which "intensive cooperation has been established and developed in almost all areas"¹⁴. Thus, a new trend has appeared in relations between two countries – the Arctic cooperation. The Russian-Italian cooperation in the Arctic also has a historical background. Thus, the expedition of L. Amedeo launched from Arkhangelsk in Russia, and the Soviet icebreaker "Krasin" took part in the expedition to rescue team of U. Nobile in 1928. It is also interesting to note that W. Nobile moved to the USSR in 1931, where he had been living about four years and participated in the implementation of the program of construction of the Soviet dirigibles and contributed to the creation of the company "Aeroflot".

After Italy has become an observer in the Arctic Council, the conditions for intensification of cooperation between the two countries have been created in the region. Three main areas can be marked in mutual cooperation: energy, new technologies and transport. Of course, one of the main areas of mutual cooperation is energy industry, where the Italian company ENI plays a key role with a number of other foreign companies. The decision of the Russian President Putin V.V, accepted in 2012 about the admission of private companies to participate in offshore projects,

¹³ L'Artico, l'Europa e l'Italia. Parla Frattini URL: <http://formiche.net/2016/02/26/artico-italia-frattini/> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹⁴ Rossiisko-ital'ianskie otnosheniia. URL: <http://roma.mid.ru/rossijsko-italianskie-otnoshenia> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

including in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, became an important event in this context. The Russian government had to admit that the monopoly of two state-owned companies-giants (Gazprom and Rosneft) for the development of the Arctic shelf deposits "hinders the development of production a little"¹⁵. The first practical result of this initiative was the formation of a strategic alliance between the companies Rosneft and ExxonMobil, and the second was an alliance of Rosneft with Italian ENI. Agreement on strategic cooperation with the energy company was signed in April 2012. The agreement provides participation of ENI in the development of the Barents Sea shelf, namely: Fedynsky and Central Barents sections. Tax benefits in offshore projects, approved previously by the Russian government became key factor the attractiveness of this alliance for ENI.

ENI follows international standards for environmental protection mandatory in its activities. For example, Rosneft and ENI signed the Agreement and Declaration of the protection of the environment and keeping biological diversity during the exploration and development of mineral resources of the Arctic continental shelf of Russia, at International Economic Forum, in St. Petersburg in 2013. The companies intend to carry out regular monitoring of changes in the natural landscape and seas of the Arctic, the development of international cooperation, taking into account the Arctic environmental protection strategy (AEPS). In order to implement the provisions of the Declaration, Rosneft and its partners are exploring the possibility of establishing the Coordination Centre with the involvement of representatives of the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia. ENI rich experience in this field can be very useful for Russian energy companies.

Another important event in the sphere of the Russian-Italian cooperation in the Arctic occurred in December 2013 during the visit of Vladimir Putin in Trieste when Memorandum on the joint project with the Italian shipbuilding corporation Fincantieri was signed. According to the agreement, the Italian company will build a drilling ship, priced at 1 billion euros, designed to work in the Russian Arctic zone in the ice up to 1.5 meters thick¹⁶. It is expected that Russia will need at least ten similar ships by 2030. They will be built in cooperation with Krylov State Research Center, which is the leader in the scientific segment of the Russian shipbuilding industry. In particular, the Centre worked on the platform "Prirazlomnaya". Under the agreement, the partners will conduct joint research and development.

¹⁵ Afontsev S. Novyi podkhod k arkticheskim resursam. URL: [http://russiancouncil.ru/ inner/id_4=370#4](http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/id_4=370#4): 16.06.2016). (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹⁶ Staalsen A. Ital'ianskaia arkticheskaja strategija razvorachivaetsia na fronte rossiiskoi nefte dobychi. URL: <http://barentsobserver.com/ru/energiya/2013/12/italyanskaya-arkticheskaya-strategiya-razvorachivaetsya-na-fronte-rossiyskom> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

The current stage of relations between Russia and Italy is largely determined by European policy. However, in current crisis situation, Italy is one of few European countries critically evaluating applied sanctions against Russia and actively supporting the development of EU relations with Russia. For instance, during its presidency in the EU, Italy attempted to restore the relations between the EU and Russia, and that was identified as one of the priorities of the Italian presidency in the European Union in 2014¹⁷. However, as the EU member, Italy "is forced to build its position with careful eye to this fact"¹⁸.

In 2014, two major events affected the plans for the development of the Arctic shelf: the fall in oil prices (primarily due to the development of shale oil production and falling demand in China) and sanctions for the Russian offshore oil production imposed by the US and EU countries. Both factors contributed to the fact that many energy projects with the participation of Russian companies (first of all, Rosneft) have been "frozen". In particular, it is prohibited to supply technology into Russia for oil and deep exploration of the Arctic shelf. According to Russian experts, "sanctions show that the West is extremely uninterested in promoting Russia in this way, in spite of its increasing demand for energy". In practical terms, the sanctions are aimed to disrupt the already existing cooperation in the Arctic between the Russian state corporation Rosneft and the American company ExxonMobil, Italian ENI and Norwegian Statoil¹⁹. As a result of the sanctions, all projects with the participation of Rosneft have become on hold. However, sanctions are detrimental not only for the Russian side, the West also bear losses. This was repeatedly stated by the representatives of the Italian business²⁰. However, starting from the second half of 2014 the cooperation between the Western and Russian companies in the Arctic has stopped.

Against this background of this lull, the signing of a tripartite agreement on strategic partnership between the Russian state corporation Rostec and the Italian Finmeccanica — one of the largest engineering holdings in Italy, and the oil company Rosneft" at the end of 2014, became the important event.

In 2015, the intention to continue the cooperation on this project have been confirmed at the level of heads of the states of Russia and Italy. In accordance with the agreement, on the plant near Moscow — HeliVert (a joint venture of holding company Russian Helicopters and

¹⁷ Posol Italii v RF: normalizatsiia otnoshenii s Moskvoi – prioritet predsedatel'stva Rima v ES. URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/383869> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹⁸ Dzhannotti A. Italiia liubit Rossiuu s ogliadkoi na ES. URL: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/news/18646/> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

¹⁹ Semushin D. Sanktsii protiv Rossii: Donbass na iazyke, Arktika na ume. 01.10. 2014 r. URL: <https://cont.ws/post/55771> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

²⁰ Ital'ianskii biznes iz-za sanktsii protiv Rossii poterial 3,6 mlrd evro. 26.03.2016 URL: <http://www.vz.ru/news/2016/3/28/802058.html> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

AgustaWestland, which is a subsidiary of Rostec and Finmeccanica) it is supposed to organize the production of medium-sized multi-purpose helicopter AW189, which will be used also in the Arctic.

The signing resulted in fact that the President of Rosneft Igor Sechin said: "The development of offshore projects is a strategic objective of Rosneft. The realization of this task is impossible without modern Arctic and marine engineering, oil and gas platforms, and modern aircrafts. We are glad to the achieved agreements, thanks to which the strategic partnership is built in such important sphere"²¹. Thus, Italy has actually breached the "pause" in the Russian-European relations, implementing the objectives of its presidency in the EU, and has confirmed its intentions to restore the relations of Russian with the European partners.

In turn, the Italian experts are very optimistic about the prospects for international cooperation in the Arctic, with the participation of Russia: "... Russia accounts for half of the Arctic region, therefore all attempts to tarnish the Arctic policy will be counterproductive also for other Arctic nations ... The international cooperation that we see in the North pole in recent years should continue, even if any progress is not achieved with the situation in Ukraine. This is the only possible perspective", says Italian expert A. Caruso²².

Conclusion

Summing up, it should be emphasized that Italy is not the new entry in the Arctic and in contrast to many other non-Arctic countries, Italy has a historical background of its presence in the Arctic, which largely predetermined Italy's membership in the Arctic Council as an observer. At this stage, the main objective of the Italian policy in the Arctic is to consolidate its position in the Arctic Council and in the region as a whole through the active involvement of Italy in the multilateral and bilateral Arctic cooperation.

Analysis of the program document of Italy about the Arctic 2016 showed that the country takes a holistic approach in its Arctic policy and diplomacy and has clearly defined the interests in the region and the priorities of its Arctic policy. At the same time Italy, successfully combining rich history and modern existing potential, defines itself as a key player in the Arctic.

With regard to relations with Russia, our country, is undoubtedly one of the priority Italian partners in the Arctic. As the economic interests are strategic for both sides, then the main bilateral cooperation projects are focused on energy and transport. Although in terms of anti-Russian

²¹ Rostekh, «Rosneft» i ital'ianskaia «Finmeccanica» dogovorilis' o proizvodstve v Rossii vertoletov AW189. URL:<http://russianhelicopters.aero/ru/helivert/news/6683.html> (accessed: 16 June 2016).

²² Caruso A. La geopolitica dell'Artico. 16.06. 2014. URL: http://italian.ruvr.ru/2014_06_16/La-geo-politica-dell-Artico-2004/ (accessed: 16 June 2016).

sanctions a number of areas of cooperation has become "frozen". However, Italy stands against sanction policy of the West towards Russia, and Italian companies continue to cooperate with Russian partners in various fields. In our opinion, at this stage the main task of two countries is to find new promising areas of the Arctic cooperation, taking into account the changed geo-economic and geopolitical situation. For the Italian diplomacy the experience in the implementation of Russia's policy in the Russian Arctic is interesting, as well as Russia's position on topical issues of regional cooperation, knowledge and experience. For Russia, the largest power in territory and in mineral resources of the Arctic, cooperation with Italy, traditional and reliable partner, under terms of deficit of its own funds and technologies, may become a unique opportunity to attract technological resources of Italy for the full development of energy resources in the Arctic region and the development of infrastructure.

Thus, in general, new opportunities for cooperation are opened today for Russia and Italy, on the level of business and scientific-technical cooperation on a wide range of areas beneficial for both parties.

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