

there are a lot of mechanisms to uphold the freedom of the press. And as far as the fact that there is some kind of friction between the media and the Government, there is an ongoing debate, an ongoing critical debate, going on. There is a lot of criticism coming from the media with respect to the Government. This is an manifestation of democracy. What you mentioned about the comments in the media of the actions of the Russian Government is testimony to the fact that we do have freedom of the press. Although we're being criticized often of that, this is not the case.

When we discuss these issues absolutely frankly, we, and I, in particular, do not think that this has to be pushed to the foreground, that new problems should be created from nothing. And I do not think that we should jeopardize the Russian-American relationship, because we're interested in the development of this relationship. We are paying close attention to all the comments of the press or opposing forces, but our responsibility is to—in spite of all these problems, of which there are plenty, our responsibility is to positively develop the Russian-American relationship.

I would like to thank the President of the United States for his constructive dialog that we've had today. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:50 p.m. in Constitution Hall at Bratislava Castle. In his remarks, he referred to Lyudmila Putin, wife of President Putin. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin: Russia's Accession to the World Trade Organization

February 24, 2005

The United States and Russia are committed to working together to complete our bilateral negotiations for Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2005. The results of the negotiations will enhance commercial opportunities between our two countries, support economic reforms that Russia has made a priority, and further

integrate Russia into the world economy. Our trade ministers have made progress in pursuing our bilateral negotiations, and we have instructed them to accelerate these efforts.

Russia and the United States will continue to work closely in bilateral and multilateral negotiations to resolve remaining issues in ways that benefit both countries. The rules-based system of the WTO will further strengthen our economic relationship in all areas, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, and the improved protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

We will work to identify areas for progress in our bilateral negotiations that will give momentum to Russia's accession to the WTO and to Russia's economic reform program.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin: U.S.-Russian Energy Cooperation

February 24, 2005

Cooperation on energy issues remains an area of great promise for U.S.-Russian relations. We will work further to realize the vision for our energy cooperation in all aspects described in our statement in May 2002, including through the mechanisms of the Commercial Energy Dialogue and the Energy Working Group. Accordingly, we have instructed our ministers to continue their energy dialogue, concentrating on ways to enhance energy security, diversify energy supplies, improve the transparency of the business and investment environment, reduce obstacles to increased commercial energy partnerships, and develop resources in an environmentally safe manner.

We call upon our Ministers of Energy and Commerce to develop recommendations, which we can support at one of our upcoming meetings, on how to further intensify and develop our energy dialogue. Those recommendations will focus on identifying barriers to energy trade and investment, promoting initiatives to remove them on the basis of predictability, fairness and law, and