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## Meeting with female aircrew members of Russian airlines

31-40 minutes

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Before the meeting, the President inspected flight and emergency rescue simulators at the training centre. They simulate a real-life mid-air environment. The President inspected a cockpit allowing pilots to more effectively control the MC-21 medium-haul narrow-body airliner. He also used a simulator to fly a Sukhoi Superjet 100 airliner in the company of Aeroflot flight detachment commander Maria Kasyanik. Vladimir Putin also visited the unique Water-Land centre, whose specialists train flight crews to deal with emergencies, including water landings, mid-air firefighting operations and evacuating passengers via inflatable ramps.

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**President of Russia Vladimir Putin:** Good afternoon, friends, Minister of Transport Vitaly Savelyev, who headed the Aeroflot Group just recently, has been asking me for quite a while to come here and to see this training and simulator centre. By coincidence, the well-known events are taking place, and March 8 is approaching. Therefore, he and I decided not to put off the visit any further and to see the facilities you have here, to find out how they are used and to evaluate this centre's prospects.

I should say that all this is quite impressive. Maria Kasyanik has shown me how to control the aircraft, and I moved the joysticks under her guidance. This is really great, all the more so as next-generation simulators are available, the chief has also discussed them, and I have had a look.

But, of course, we should use this opportunity to discuss the sector's development prospects. We will probably also talk about the current situation because, naturally, it is impossible to avoid it.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you all on the upcoming International Women's Day and to wish you and your colleagues all the best. I will be able to address all women of Russia a bit later.

But I would like to say that the sector which we are talking about and where you work and with which you are affiliated employs over 70,000 women, including over 200 pilots and co-pilots, as well as flight attendants, of course, who are a special category and caste.

The people in Russia have always treated aviation with great respect and interest, especially for ladies in aviation. I think the first female Russian aviators emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they won a reputation for themselves during the Great Patriotic War. We know all those famous names of female aviation regiments and their combat record. Today, women work in all positions, including flight controllers, engineers, technicians, and I repeat once again, flight attendants and pilots. On the whole, this is a substantial female force that supplements the aviation sector's male section.

I think that is all for opening remarks since it would be more useful and to the point if I answer your questions. So, let's go

over to that part now.

Once again, congratulations on the upcoming International Women's Day.

**Remark:** Thank you.

Do you have any questions? Or shall we just have some tea?

**Maria Kotova:** We have questions.

Good afternoon, Mr President,

My name is Maria Kotova. I am the co-pilot of the Airbus A320 airliner operated by Aeroflot.

My question concerns the current situation in Ukraine. We all support your actions and the special operation underway there. Of course, the most important question that, one way or another, each of us has been asking ourselves lately is: why did this special operation begin? Could it not have been avoided?

In our minds, we understand and strongly support your actions, but as women we worry about our families and loved ones who live in Ukraine. We are aware that the civilians are not impacted. But still, we would like you to reassure us: what is in store for us at the end of this road? What is the military operation in Ukraine supposed to end with?

Thank you.

**Vladimir Putin:** I will provide a brief overview and start, as they say in such cases, from the "centre of the field." I mentioned this at the beginning of the operation and even before this decision was made, which was undoubtedly a difficult decision to make.

What is this about? The fact of the matter is that after the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine, which was, unfortunately, strongly supported by Western countries... Let us face it. They

are not hiding the fact that they spent US\$5 billion on it, handing out cookies on Maidan and so on. And then, instead of bringing the situation back on track, even if it spiralled out of control, even if it was what is known as an excessive act – there is such a legal concept, that is, they planned one thing, but did another. Anyway, they could and should have brought this situation back onto the political track. Moreover, right before the coup, three foreign ministers came to Kiev in 2014, signed an agreement with the incumbent authorities and acted as guarantors of these agreements to the effect that the situation would remain within the political track.

Nothing of the kind. They carried out a coup d'état and supported the perpetrators. Then followed the well-known events related to Crimea and southeastern Ukraine, Donbass, whose residents refused to support the coup.

As you know, Crimea made a decision, people came to the referendum and voted to once again become part of the Russian Federation. Naturally, we could not but support this, all the more so since they were threatened by nationalists and neo-Nazis. There is a great deal of evidence that they were right.

Later on, or practically in parallel, events started in Donbass. What was the outcome? People who began to resist these developments were persecuted. The Kiev authorities started conducting military operations on that territory. They conducted two large-scale punitive operations with the use of heavy weapons and combat aircraft. They attacked Donetsk directly with tanks and bombed its squares from aircraft.

Both military campaigns failed. They sustained defeat. This was followed by the emergence of the so-called Minsk Agreements

or the Package of Measures, to use its official name. They showed the way to a peaceful settlement of this conflict. And we did everything we could to let the developments follow in this vein to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and protect the interests of the people who live on these territories.

And what did they demand? Basic things: the right to speak their mother tongue, this is the Russian language, and follow their traditions and culture. There were no special demands. Nothing special.

But no. These territories were put under siege and switched off from the banking system, food supplies and payments of pensions and other benefits. Sometimes, some handouts were thrown in. But to receive those benefits and pensions people had to cross the delimitation line.

Now listen carefully. Maybe this will sound rough but the situation compels me to say such things. You see yourselves that stray dogs attack people in different regions. They injure and even kill people (this is a separate problem and the local authorities must deal with it). Then we see how these dogs are poisoned and shot dead. But, look, people in Donbass are not stray dogs. From 13,000 to 14,000 people have been killed over these years. Over 500 children were killed or mutilated.

But what is most intolerable is that the so-called civilised West preferred to turn a blind eye to these events during all these years. Over eight years!

Moreover, recently the Kiev authorities began to say bluntly that they are not going to fulfil these agreements. They are saying this from TV screens and online. They are saying on the record: "We don't like them, we won't do anything."

Meanwhile, Russia continued to be accused of failing to fulfil

these agreements. This is simply nonsense, the theatre of the absurd: the white is called black and the black is called white.

It has been getting worse lately. Suddenly, there has been renewed talk about admitting Ukraine to NATO. Actually, it has been on for a long time, but has intensified lately. Do you understand what this could lead to or even can still lead to? If Ukraine is a NATO country, then in accordance with the North Atlantic Treaty, all other members must support that country in the event of a military conflict.

No one is recognising Crimea as a part of Russia, except for you and me. They carry out military operations in Donbass, and they will also move into Crimea, and we will have to fight with the entire NATO organisation. Do you see what that means?

Are the consequences clear enough? I think that everyone understands.

Now they are talking about gaining a nuclear status, that is, acquiring nuclear weapons. We cannot ignore such things either, especially because we know how the so-called West acts with regard to Russia. First, Ukraine has had nuclear competencies since the Soviet times. As far as enrichment and nuclear materials are concerned, they are capable of launching such projects. They have missile competencies. Suffice it to mention Yuzhmash – it created intercontinental ballistic missile equipment for the Soviet Union. They can boost it and do it. And they will also receive help with that from across the ocean. And then they will say that we do not recognise their nuclear status, that they did it themselves, and they will put these systems under control, and from that moment, from that

very second, Russia's future will change dramatically. From then on, our strategic adversaries would not even need to have intercontinental ballistic missiles. They would be able to keep us at the nuclear gunpoint, and that would be it.

But how can we let this go unnoticed? These are absolutely real threats, not some far-fetched nonsense. And our young men who are fighting there now are giving their lives, they are giving their lives to fight for our future, for the future of our children. This is a completely obvious thing.

People who do not want to understand this, especially among today's leadership, must understand that if they continue to do what they are doing – I have already said this too – they will call into question the very future of Ukrainian statehood. And if this happens, it will be entirely on them.

What is happening now? I have already spoken about the goals we have identified.

The first is to protect the people who live in Donbass, of course. How? By demilitarising and denazifying Ukraine and giving it a neutral status. Why? Because a neutral country will not be planning on joining NATO. Right now, their Constitution says they are planning to join NATO. You understand, they included this in the Constitution.

What is meant by denazification? I have spoken with my Western colleagues about this: "So what? You also have radical nationalists." Yes, we do, but we do not have people with extreme views in the Government. And everyone admits that they have them. Yes, maybe we have some idiots who are running around with the swastika, but do we support this at the government level? Do we have thousands of people parading with torches in Moscow or in our other regional

capitals, with the swastika and with torches, like in the 1930s in Germany? Do we have this? But they do, and they support it. Do we support those who killed Russians, Jews, and Poles during the war? Do we hail them as heroes? But they do.

What is happening now is also very important. Look, foreign citizens have been taken hostage in Sumy and Kharkov – over 6,000 young people, students. They were driven to a railway station and have been kept there for three days. We told everyone about this and sent this information to the current leadership of Ukraine. “Yes, yes, of course, we will deal with it now.” We informed the leaders of major European countries about this. I spoke to them personally. “Yes, yes, we will influence them right now.” We told the UN Secretary-General about this: “Yes, yes, we will settle this problem now.” But nobody is doing anything about it.

They treat even worse those people whom they consider their own citizens. They are simply using them as a human shield.

This is taking place in Mariupol now as we are talking with you. They called us from the government, from Kiev and spoke with our military: “Provide humanitarian corridors so that people can leave.” Of course, our people responded instantly and even suspended hostilities. They looked at what was happening. Nobody was allowed out. Do you understand what they are doing? They do not let anyone leave but are using people as a human shield. Who are they? The neo-Nazis, of course.

We note the presence of militants from the Middle East and some European countries there. We know about them, we hear them in the air. They are using so-called Jihad mobiles – they stuff cars with explosives and drive them towards the troops. But they fail to achieve anything and they won't



reach their aims.

Who are they if not neo-Nazis? It is by these actions that they are destroying their own country and their statehood.

Therefore, one of our key demands is demilitarisation. In other words, we are helping people, residents of Donbass to achieve a neutral status and demilitarisation of the country because we must understand clearly what weapons are there, where they are deployed and who controls them.

Different options are possible here. We are discussing them now, in particular, with representatives of the Kiev government during the talks in Belarus. We are grateful to President Lukashenko for organising this work and helping us conduct them. Our proposals are on the negotiating table. We hope a group of negotiators from Kiev will respond positively to them. This is more or less what I wanted to say. Let's go on.

**Yulia Shvidkaya:** Yulia Shvidkaya, co-pilot with Aeroflot Airlines.

Good afternoon, Mr President.

I have a question about the current situation. The thing is that there are so many rumours about the possibility of martial law, the enlistment of volunteers, the call-up of reservists, and that the new conscripts will be sent to Ukraine.

Can you tell us precisely if martial law will be declared and if conscripts will be sent to Ukraine?

**Vladimir Putin:** Much of what is taking place now, of what we can see and what we come up against are methods of fighting Russia. Incidentally, the sanctions that are imposed on us are like a war. Thankfully, it has not got to that yet.

I think that our so-called partners understand what this can lead

to and how much is at stake, despite their reckless statements, for example, like the statement made by the UK Foreign Secretary, when she blurted out that NATO could get involved in the conflict. And we immediately had to take a decision to put our deterrence forces on high alert.

Their reaction was instantaneous: they said that it was a misunderstanding. But nobody rebuffed her (the UK Foreign Secretary is a woman), and nobody has disavowed those statements. They could have told us something like, "You know, it's her personal opinion, take no notice." But nobody uttered a single word! What should we think about this? How should we regard it? Of course, we took that statement as a warning and acted accordingly.

And now I will answer your question about volunteers, conscripts, martial law and the like. Under the law, martial law is declared by a Presidential executive order, which should be approved by the Federation Council, in case of foreign aggression, in particular, in the zones of hostilities.

This is not the case now, and I hope it will not come to that. This is the first point.

Second, about the state of alert. There are several options: martial law or the state of alert, which is also declared by a presidential executive order and approved by the Federation Council in case of large-scale internal threats.

There is also the state of emergency. It is usually declared in a specific region or throughout the country in the event of manmade disasters, natural disasters, etc. Thankfully, this is not the case either.

We are not planning to declare a state of alert on the territory of the Russian Federation. There are no such plans and no

necessity for this now.

Yes, we see that attempts are being made to stir up our society. Incidentally, this is further proof of what I have said – that we are dealing not with ordinary radicals but with neo-Nazis. Our people can freely express their opinions of what they like or do not like about our actions in Ukraine. But in Ukraine those who express views such as members of the so-called liberal part of our society do are grabbed on the street and shot. We have proof of that. Our security services are collecting this information and will provide it later on. They are simply shot dead. In our country, some of our liberal intellectuals hold protest rallies, but those who say similar things about Russia in Ukraine are simply executed straightaway, without charge or trial.

Now, about the martial law. To reiterate, it is usually imposed in case of an external aggression, a military threat. I hope this will not happen, despite irresponsible statements by certain officials.

We are hearing voices that a no-fly zone should be imposed over Ukraine. It is impossible to do this in Ukraine. It can only be done from the territory of neighbouring states. However, we will consider any move in this direction as participation in the armed conflict of the country from whose territory a threat to our servicemen is created. We will consider them participants in hostilities that very second. Their membership in any organisation will not matter then. So, I hope the understanding of this is there and it will not come to this, either.

Only professional servicemen – officers and contract soldiers – are taking part in this operation. There are no conscripts, and we are not planning to get them involved. To reiterate, only men who made a very responsible voluntary choice to take part

in this operation and to defend their Motherland are participating in this operation. They are carrying out this mission honourably. In my answer to your first question, I provided the reason why this is so and why we are entitled to say this.

The same applies to those who are called up to the training camps. We do not plan to do this with this category, either. They are regularly called up to training camps. They were called up before and they will be called up afterwards. But we are not going to have this category participate in this conflict, in this operation. We have enough forces and means to address the tasks that we have set for ourselves with the use of the professional army.

By the way, speaking of the operation itself I know there are many speculations about it. Frankly, I have no time to get into that, but they report to me that there is much chitchat about what is going on. All analysts are seeing what is happening, so I will not reveal any secret to you. We could have acted in a variety of ways. We could simply (by the way, this answers your question, in part) help the republics of Donbass right on the line of contact, at the frontline, so to say, and simply reinforce them with our army. But in this case, the other side, I mean reckless support for nationalists and radicals coming from the West, would have provided endless support with the material resources, ammunition, equipment, and so on.

Therefore, our General Staff and the Defence Ministry took a different road. The first thing they did was destroy all the military infrastructure. Not completely but most of it: arms and ammunition depots, aircraft and air defence systems. Destroying air defence systems takes some time (you are civilians, yet you are connected with aviation) – they must be identified and then hit. This work has been practically finished.

Hence the demand to impose a no-fly zone. However, doing so would have tremendous and disastrous consequences not only for Europe but also globally. I think those on the other side who are not completely at sea understand that.

That is why we chose that road, and it turned out to be absolutely correct. Our servicemen are working without haste and are doing everything to ensure the safety of civilians. Unfortunately, those bandits, neo-Nazis do not spare people. They shoot dead even their own service personnel who do not want to offer armed resistance. We know about such facts, too. Nationalists, Banderites, neo-Nazis – it is hard to call them anything else – shoot their own servicemen. These nationalists were put in nearly every military unit, up to several dozen in each, and they act in exactly that cruel way.

But I repeat that we are not engaging and are not going to engage conscripts or reservists in this military operation. I presume that our army will fulfil all the tasks it is facing, and I do not have the slightest doubt about that. The very course of the operation proves that. It is going according to schedule, and everything is being done according to the General Staff's plan.

As for volunteers and those young people who come to military recruiting stations, we are grateful to them for this patriotic impulse and the desire to support the country and the Armed Forces. The very fact of their coming does matter, for sure. However, their assistance is not needed for now, and I believe it will not be needed.

I am turning to the cameras so that they will see and hear me say, "Thank you."

Let us proceed.

**Kristina Shaposhnikova:** Good afternoon, Mr President,

Kristina Shaposhnikova, Aeroflot Airbus A320 pilot.

This question may be of concern to many people: given the economic circumstances, are any measures being taken or planned to support families and socially vulnerable groups, as well as public-sector employees? Probably, many are also interested in whether the private sector will receive any support, since it provides employment and pays salaries.

Thank you.

**Vladimir Putin:** First, we will adjust the social benefits as planned. Pensions and all social benefits will be adjusted.

With regard to the private sector, given the current circumstances, I believe the only way forward is to provide maximum economic freedom to those in business.

We have adopted several decisions in this respect, and the Government is working to expand the list of these support measures. It also includes lifting various restrictions on entrepreneurial activities, in part concerning liberalisation of criminal legislation.

For example, I support the idea – as a matter of fact, this decision has already been adopted – of removing the threat of criminal prosecution for economic crimes, especially if the damage has been paid for. This is my first point.

Second, with regard to tax crimes, indeed, breaking the law is unacceptable, but we agreed that criminal cases in this respect can only be initiated based on materials submitted by the taxation service. We will certainly do this, and we will go down this path.

This is extremely important for people in business. People are

aware of it. Frankly, the private sector has been raising these questions for a long time now. I think they will appreciate it accordingly when they hear it.

You had a second question. I jotted it down, but my notes are illegible.

**Kristina Shaposhnikova:** The question was about supporting families.

**Vladimir Putin:** Look, we have developed an entire system to support families, especially families with children. We pay benefits for infants to 18 months, then from 18 months to 3 years, and from 3 to 7 years, as well as expectant mothers. Pregnant women facing financial hardship are also supported. Also, support is provided to families with children and single-parent families with children from 8 to 18. Our goal is to develop a single system. Some regions provide support for children 8 to 18, others do not. A federal system is not available yet, either.

Our goal is to develop a unified, clear and harmonious support system for expectant mothers and all children under 18 years of age. We have drafted a plan to do this. Trust me, I discussed this matter with the Government – the social bloc, the Finance Ministry and the Executive Office – this morning. Appropriate measures are being developed – I do not want to get ahead of myself – but I will announce our next steps in building this coordinated system soon.

We will definitely go down this road and put in place a system for supporting families from pregnancy and the birth of a baby to 18 years of age. We will announce the decisions and the steps to be taken along this path soon.

**Kristina Shaposhnikova:** Thank you.

**Vladimir Putin:** Go ahead, please.

**Viktorija Karptsova:** Good afternoon, Mr President.

My name is Viktorija Karptsova. I am a flight attendant with Aeroflot Airlines.

Here is the question I wanted to ask you. The aviation industry has been facing challenges ever since the onset of the pandemic around the world. The number of flights decreased, but in early 2022 there was hope that we would be flying as much as we used to. However, one country after another has closed its airspace to Russian carriers, as we have been learning from the news. Of course, this is a double-edged sword. For example, how can people now fly from London to Tokyo? What a complex issue. Of course, this happened before, back in the Soviet days. However, I wanted to know how long you believe this situation will last?

**Vladimir Putin:** You see, Viktorija, this does not depend just on us. This depends on those who are doing this. They are hurting themselves. I do not think that they like what they are doing. Their authorities are exerting political pressure on them to take these actions.

Without the trans-Siberian overflights you are referring to, they will have to fly around Siberia, since we are closing our air space to them, meaning that they will need more time to reach their destinations, spend more fuel, which in turn will drive up airfares, and so forth.

I proceed from the premise that this sector will evolve with the overall situation.

As for the pandemic you mentioned, domestic air traffic decreased by 88 percent during the pandemic, while foreign



flights were down by 90 percent, with almost all flights cancelled. Overall, we have some experience in dealing with situations like this. That said, last year domestic passenger traffic increased 20 percent compared to the pre-pandemic level. I may not have the exact numbers, but I think passenger traffic reached 87.5 million, which is 20 percent higher than pre-pandemic.

What will we do now? Of course, we will seek to increase domestic traffic. We will operate foreign destinations where they remain open, and we will try to change the situation.

You know, there is of course a negative side to all this, since it creates inconveniences for passengers. Still, there are also advantages in terms of infrastructure development here at home. We will develop the domestic aviation industry, build our own aircraft, including the MC-21, the Il-114–300, Baikal, etc.

We will keep developing our airfields and airports. There is an entire programme for developing the airfield network. I think it includes 57 airfields and 60 various initiatives. What are they? They deal with improving infrastructure in all its aspects, building new runways and so forth. This is what improving the “country’s territorial connectivity” is all about.

There is a lot to be done, but this will be yet another development driver, including in terms of industrial and infrastructure development, just as we created an impetus to develop the agricultural sector some time ago. I think last year we made US\$25 billion from agricultural exports. This seemed impossible only a short while ago, but we did it. This is not just about the volume of these exports. We have been able to fully cover the country’s needs in terms of staple food. In this

regard, we can say that this was a blessing in disguise, as the saying goes. Make no mistake, we will do the same with aircraft manufacturing and passenger transport.

**Yulia Vasilevskaya:** Good afternoon, Mr President.

Yulia Vasilevskaya, Aeroflot pilot.

I will start by mentioning the widely popular MC-21 aircraft. It is definitely good, and not in the least inferior to foreign analogues in terms of technical or any other properties. At the same time, the company will not be able to replace Boeing and Airbus overnight. As an Airbus pilot, I am worried about the future of our fleet.

In this regard, I have the following question: how will the aviation industry be operating in the near future when leasing companies want to take our aircraft? I am also concerned about the procurement of important spare parts for the timely maintenance and repair of aircraft in our fleet.

Thanks.

**Vladimir Putin:** First, there is something I need to establish. You noted that the MC-21 is not inferior to its Western counterparts. It is better in many respects, really better: it has a wider body, more space for middle seat, there is more space for luggage compartments – it is definitely better.

By the way, over the past few years, I believe our competitors, including American ones, have made some really unscrupulous moves. They actually included certain materials – which have nothing to do with the defence industry, they are formally double-purpose, but they have never been used for any double purpose – they included some of those materials on their sanctions lists. Why? Because they had their own products,

their aircraft that were clearly inferior to the MC-21 in competitive terms.

We ended up making what they tried to strip us of – we invented our own innovative materials, and they are even better than foreign-made ones. Unfortunately, this led to a slight shift to the right, as they say referring to schedules, that is, our country was behind by about twelve to eighteen months in this respect. But we did it.

We will do the same in other areas. You know the saying: they won't lock the barn door till after the horse is stolen. This is definitely about us. When we are cornered, we start sweating and achieve what we need to. It was the same with the M-C21. It has a PD-14 engine. Not only is it not inferior [to foreign ones], but it is actually better in many respects. Yes, it will take some more time, a few months, and the aircraft will be propelled by Russian-made engines, and it will be cutting-edge and fully Russian-made.

Leasing companies and spare parts – I am not going to go into detail right now, but your former CEO, now Minister of Transport, has some ideas, and he reports them to me regularly, calls me almost every morning. On the whole, I support these considerations. Let's give him the opportunity to negotiate with his partners. I hope they will agree on things that overlap with their own interests. But I am certain that we will fly.

**Yulia Vasilevskaya:** Thank you.

**Vladimir Putin:** Do you want to add anything? Go ahead, please.

**Natalya Gorbunova:** Natalya Gorbunova, Aeroflot flight attendant.

Mr President, now, in this situation, we would really like to help both the country and our industry. We must have more domestic flights. Can you please tell us about the development of regional aviation in the next few years?

**Vladimir Putin:** You know, and I have already mentioned, that one of our priority goals is to create territorial connections inside the country in several areas. First, this includes domestic airliners starting with the L-410; Il-114–300 with 60 or, I think, 62 seats, and the MC-21. Masha and I have just been to the Sukhoi Superjet-100 cockpit simulator. We will develop all of these. If domestic sourcing for some of them is not complete we will achieve it by any means. This is the first point.

The second component is airports. After all, to fly it is necessary to take off and land. So, we have an extensive programme in this respect and it is underway. By the way, a dozen projects have already been finished, such as modernisation and construction of new runways. We will implement this programme and go further along this road.

A third point – we will, of course, continue subsidising some flights. This includes the Far East and the company operating there – Aurora. This year we have increased subsidies on these routes by five times to 6 billion rubles and will increase it further, if necessary.

So, we will try to avoid situations where people have to fly from one small town to another via Moscow. This is our number one goal. We will work on this consistently, but without haste, and we will certainly resolve it.

Anything else? Go ahead, please.

**Galina Kairova:** Good afternoon, Mr President.

I am Galina Kairova, an Aeroflot flight training pilot.

All of us were strongly affected by the pandemic. But our aviation has withstood this test and last year domestic air flights even exceeded 2019 levels.

**Vladimir Putin:** Yes, I said that.

**Galina Kairova:** And, this was partly due to state support.

**Vladimir Putin:** Plus 20 percent

**Galina Kairova:** Yes, this is a lot and enough.

What can we expect now? What should we do next? And how will the state support our industry?

**Vladimir Putin:** We are starting to go around in circles a bit.

I basically already replied to this but will say it again. I have just talked about subsidising these flights, including to the Far East and other areas. We will increase this support and we have already increased it five-fold. We will develop transport infrastructure and manufacture our own aircraft. And, of course we will do all we can to have proper connections between the regions in our country so our people can see it.

It is not just our people that need this, although it is a priority for the economy. This is not just about the transport business but it also concerns the businesspeople you were worried about. It is important to depart and arrive on time. I know when major projects are discussed, specialists always want to know whether they can quickly get to their destination and quickly make it back to Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan or other large cities to resolve some business issues or simply return to their families if they were in the North. So, we will move forward in all of these directions.

I would like to wish you a happy holiday once again and wish

you all the best.

Thank you for such a warm reception.