The European Union, Russia and international challenges

According to the Minister there is a need for a pragmatic cooperation between the EU and Russia.

− There are a number of international challenges, in particular fight against terrorism, illegal migration and conflicts in the Middle East that can be addressed only by finding common ground with Moscow. With respect to Ukraine, the implementation of the Minsk Agreements by all parties is the key to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

Szijjártó thinks that the EU should avoid using the sanctions policy as the single instrument towards Russia.

− At one point, we have to make a firm evaluation whether imposing restrictive measures is the most effective way to achieve our goals related to the Ukraine crisis. If the EU and Russia cannot reach an agreement on the conditions of a pragmatic cooperation, the EU will severely fall behind in the international economic competition.

And how Minister Szijjártó comments on Brexit and the future of the European Union?

− When we speak about Brexit, we have to speak about the causes that have led to it. The decision of the Britons was based on a tension between their expectations towards Europe and the actual performance of the European Union and its institutions. The trust in the EU’s ability to address major challenges has broken in the UK, Minister Szijjártó ponders. Brexit is a symptom of the problem: it is not the cause.

About the European integration and current challenges

It is obvious that the European Community and later the EU has brought peace and robust economic development for the continent.

− But the process has slowly reached a point where peoples of Europe have lost the ownership. When external threats – like mass economic migration – have appeared at our borders, the EU could not bring the effective solutions. We have witnessed that only Member States themselves can overcome current challenges. Therefore, the role of Member States has to be enhanced, Minister says.

− The migration crisis has put Europe under huge pressure: it is our common interest to find sustainable solutions to this challenge, Szijjártó continues. I am convinced that we have to help migrants as close to their countries of origin as possible instead of bringing the problems to Europe.

− Hungary hopes that the new U.S. administration cooperating closely with Russia will contribute to the stabilization of the entire Middle East region. We urge all parties to avoid further violence and bloodshed in Syria and to take the necessary steps towards a peaceful solution, Minister emphasizes.

Political relations between Hungary and Finland

According to Minister Szijjártó, helping Fenno-Ugric people maintaining their identity is a common task for Hungary and Finland.

− There is simply no other nation so far away from Hungary in geographical terms that would be so close to our hearts as Finland and the Finns.

− There are no open issues in our bilateral relations, which are based on our common set of values and mostly common interests, he assures.
As a result of successful economic policy, Hungary has been on a sustainable growth path for several years, and nation’s macroeconomic indicators have been widely acknowledged.

− In line with that we are seeking after new opportunities in order to give impetus to our bilateral trade and investment relations. We believe that ICT, innovation and cleantech might be in the focus of future co-operations. Moreover, the long-term commitment of Finnish companies investing in Hungary is of key importance, we warmly welcome their future investments plans, Minister concludes.

Minister Péter Szijjártó speaking at the University of Helsinki. Photo: Pekka Rautio.