
Medvedev vows no change in economic policies if elected president

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MOSCOW, January 22 (RIA Novosti) - Dmitry Medvedev, the man publicly-backed by Russian President Vladimir Putin to succeed him, pledged on Tuesday to maintain current economic policies if elected president in polls set for March 2.

"We will adhere to the course toward the development of free enterprise, the protection of property rights, and the promotion of free market principles," Medvedev, currently a first deputy prime minister, told an All-Russia Civic Forum.

He said Russia needs decades of stable and sustained development, something that it lacked in the 20th century.

The presidential hopeful said Russia's position on major international issues was in conformity with international standards, adding that its efforts to bring domestic energy prices in line with world prices "were our obligation when joining international economic organizations."

He said Russia would be open to dialogue and cooperation with the international community, adding that its participation in international affairs would be based on international law.

On the domestic front, Medvedev urged non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to uphold civil rights, and not to fight against the ruling authorities.

He said civil society was an essential element of political life and that a structured civil society "should come as a result of our stable and civilized development."

He also said the fight against Russia's rampant corruption should become one of the country's national projects and that NGOs and non-profit organizations should play a lead role in exercising control over the ruling establishment.

Four 'national projects' - aimed at producing affordable housing, a modern healthcare system, high-quality education and developing the agro-industrial sector - are currently being implemented in Russia, overseen by Dmitry Medvedev.

Russia's Central Electoral Commission registered Medvedev as a presidential candidate on Monday.

In mid-December, Putin backed Medvedev as his successor. Medvedev, 42, board chairman of Russian energy giant Gazprom, was earlier nominated by the ruling United Russia party as a presidential candidate. Putin agreed to be prime minister should Medvedev win the March 2 election.

United Russia has said it is convinced that Medvedev will ensure continuity for Putin's policies.
