



# Foreign & Commonwealth Office

18 March 2016

Eastern Europe & Central Asia  
Directorate,  
King Charles Street,  
London,  
SW1A 2AH

## Your Freedom Of Information Request: 0089-16

Thank you again for your request for information which we received on 25 January 2016. In your request you asked for:

*Information about the Valdai discussion club's XI session in October 2014 in Sochi city.*

As set out in my letter of 23 February, I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some information has been withheld using the following exemptions:

### Section 21 - Information accessible by other means

Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. The FCO holds records of several publicly available articles which are relevant to your request. These are available online at the following sites:

- <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860>
- <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/04/14/could-it-have-been-otherwise/>
- <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-decline-challenge-by-joseph-s--nye-2015-04?barrier=true>
- <http://www.clingendael.nl>
- <http://tass.ru/en/russia>

### Section 27 – International Relations

Some information relates to discussion with other governments in multilateral organisations. The disclosure of this would be likely to prejudice relations between the UK and other governments in the future.

The effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote UK interest through international relations will be prejudiced. Foreign governments may be more reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government, to the detriment of UK interests. For all these reasons, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case,

the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27 (1)(b).

### **Section 35 – Formulation of government policy**

Some information is exempt under Section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act, which also requires the application of a public interest test. It is recognised that there is public interest in the greater transparency in the decision making process to ensure accountability within public authorities. However, officials need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies, including considerations of pros and cons, without there being a risk of premature disclosure which might close off better options and inhibit the free and frank discussion of all policy options. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

### **Section 41 - Information provided in confidence**

Some information you requested is exempt under section 41 of the Act, as disclosure would be a breach of confidence. The successful working of British diplomacy depends upon sources being able to provide information in confidence without fear that this will be made public. Exemptions under Section 41 do not require the application of a public interest test.

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Yours sincerely,

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia Directorate**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**



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