

## **The Russian-Chinese programme for co-operation in the Far East has been launched**

The Russian Ministry of Regional Development (MRD) on 22 June approved the implementation of the first nine investment projects as part of the co-operation programme between Russian and Chinese Far East regions until 2018 which had been adopted in 2009. This decision has opened up the way towards the fulfilment of this ambitious plan, which envisages China's engagement in the exploitation of natural resources and the development of the Russian Far East. Russia is interested in Chinese investments in the region, however on condition that it maintains full control over them.

The programme for co-operation between the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia regions and the Chinese north-eastern region in 2009–2018 was signed by the presidents of the two countries in September 2009. The document includes a list of 205 joint projects to be implemented in the territories of both countries. This programme is a key project for bilateral economic co-operation and is expected to involve China in the development of the Far East. However, Moscow has failed to embark on its practical implementation over the past few months, which was probably caused by diverging evaluations among Russian experts of the programme's impact..

The projects approved by the MRD include: construction of a power plant in Amur Oblast, the development of coal deposits in Chukotka and Magadan Oblast, developing the forest industry in Sakhalin, the creation of tourist resorts in the Lake Baikal region and construction of a railway bridge on the Amur. The total value of all projects amounts to US\$13 billion, of which US\$1.7 billion is to be contributed from the Russian state budget, and the rest by investors from the two countries. The final investment agreements as part of the projects are to be signed at the time of President Medvedev's visit to China this autumn. <WojK>