

# Chavez's Re-election Wins Belarussian Praise and Russian Endorsement

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko congratulated Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on his election to a third consecutive six-year term Monday as a Russian observer mission declared the weekend vote fair.

Lukashenko, who has developed close ties with Venezuela even as his authoritarian style has earned sanctions from the West, lavished praise on Chavez in his congratulatory message.

"We felt involved with our heart and soul, and your supporters never doubted your victory," he said in a statement posted on his website. "Together we can do all we can so that the people of Venezuela do not regret yesterday's choice and trust you as a genuine national leader."

A team of Russian election observers headed by Nikolai Konkin, a member of the Central Elections Commission, deemed Sunday's vote legitimate and said the only problem consisted of long lines at the polling stations.

"We haven't found any breaches or complaints," he said, according to Interfax. "During the day, we visited seven regions with five to 10 polling places. During the ballot counting, we visited seven centers."

Alexei Pushkov, chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, said Chavez's victory indicated the effectiveness of his government's policies to improve the lives of ordinary people, Interfax reported.

President Vladimir Putin didn't immediately post a congratulatory statement on the Kremlin website, though Izvestia reported that he had been ready to congratulate Chavez before the votes were counted.

With 90 percent of the vote counted, Chavez won 55 percent of the vote compared with 45 percent for his challenger, Henrique Capriles Radonski. The 10-point lead was the smallest-ever for Chavez in a presidential race.

Russia works closely with Chavez's government in natural resources and military cooperation. Russia is to invest \$20 billion into the oil-rich tar sands of the Orinoco Belt and has about \$10 billion in military contracts.

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