

The Euro-Atlantic Integration of South-Eastern Europe

Dear Madame Chairwomen,
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

On 1st July Poland took over the leadership of the Council of the European Union. Just some days ago we passed the half-mark of the Polish Presidency. Poland assumed European leadership responsibility after over 7 years of active participation in the European Union. We have gained better understanding of the process and we are grateful for all generous support which has helped us to make it possible.

We should not forget - despite all problems - that the united Europe is a profoundly optimistic story for our continent. Europe has been gradually transformed for the benefit of us all. The strength of the continent has been undoubtedly preserved thanks to the Euro-Atlantic co-operation.

Co-operation across all policy areas now is automatic, organised, broader and deeper.

This is a story of optimism, growth, teamwork and commitment. A story of success and solidarity. There has been nothing else like it in world history. That very ambition - in all its complexity and determination - is creating new problems.

In many parts of both Europe and United States public debts are growing. Unemployment is stubbornly high. New jobs are not emerging.

We face other painful strategic questions: long-term energy supplies; migration and border control; fierce economic - and political - competition from other parts of the world; instability across North Africa and the Middle East.

Above all, we face the issues around the Eurozone, Europe's financial markets and other areas of the Euro-Atlantic zone.

All these problems are combining to test - as never before - some of our deepest shared assumptions of wide solidarity and common resolve.

Yes, our part of the world is facing severe problems. In the months and years to come, we will need to take transformative, far-reaching decisions.

But both understanding of the difficult moment we are facing and the positive and affirmative approach to the European project inspire us NOT to forget the further reaching goals. Wanting to solve our problems NOW we should not neglect the work that must be done to make our European project more complete TOMORROW.

This conviction is written in the programme of the Polish Presidency where GROWTH, SECURITY and OPENNESS are the key words.

Keeping Europe open is one of three major tasks of the Polish Presidency. The openness consists by two elements: enlargement and neighbourhood policy directed both to the East and to the South. The openness towards those two last directions should not be understood in terms of competition but complementarity.

As far as enlargement is concerned the signing of the Accession Treaty with Croatia in December in Warsaw will be among major events of the Polish Presidency. It will be one of the last steps towards the full EU-membership to come in the middle of 2013.

The Croatian Accession being important for Croatia itself is - at the same time - very important for the entire European Union. It is a proof that despite all the problems Europe is facing - EU remains an attractive political

project. That European Union demanding much in terms of reforms and adjustments still has much to offer.

For the entire region of South-Eastern Europe in turn - it makes once again very clear that reforms and acceptance of European standards are worth the effort. That difficult decisions, acceptance of European standards give new chances for the future. That there is no realistic alternative for joining the European family.

We know from our own experience that - in this part of the world - there is no other effective way to provide oneself with stability and development perspective but the European way. As it was true in case of Central Europe it is true in case of South-Eastern Europe as well. We strongly support membership in the EU of all countries of the South-Eastern Europe. However at the same time the principle of conditionality must be respected. The reforms are equally required by the European Community as by all our own countries and societies as well. There is no secret solution to be invented. Many countries of our widely understood region went that way with success.

I am sure that the main reason for success of Polish transformation after 1989 was - from the very beginning - the proper focus. Poland was able to concentrate on political, economic and social reforms thanks to the commitment of both the elites and the broader scopes of the society.

At the same time good relations and good will towards all of our neighbours, created good environment for positive reforms.

A very important factor in this approach was regional co-operation. Co-operation within the Visegrad Group helped us to bring our own efforts and ambitions into a broader context. Visegrad has been a good example of non-formal, lasting and fruitful co-operation. A co-operation where the accent has been put on partnership and achieving goals and not on the

issues of leadership. Visegrad group countries have been concentrated on that what unites and gives common values and not on what is burden from the past.

Another factor were the elites directed towards reaching goals, understanding that to lose time means to make the problems more difficult to solve. We have already been generously sharing our Polish experiences in this respect with all those who are motivated and want to use the opportunity. We will be open for assistance and support in the future, too.

In a globalizing and a more and more complex world the solutions cannot be ^{found} find in a closed and xenophobic environment. Policies based on national resentments are ~~not~~ policies leading to nowhere. A fair reckoning with the past, especially if it is one's own, is a source of strength not weakness.

Please allow me to be more personal

Being Ambassador to Zagreb during the last 3 years I have had the opportunity to witness the great effort and devotion to the task of Accession from the Croatian side, the many ups and downs on the bumpy road towards success. But for sure one fundamental thing was never missing: determination and motivation.

I think as well that having my Polish experience, from the turmoil of the 1980ties, constant confrontation between the Solidarity trade union and totalitarian regime via the Round Table talks and the first non-communist government in the Central and Eastern Europe I can understand the complexity of the task. And I know that even seemingly very difficult tasks can at last be put forward in the right direction.

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I hope that the momentum gained by the Croatian success will encourage others to accelerate on the same path not to miss the opportunity.

Thank you.