

Welcome address by H. E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, to the Participants of the Conference "Building a Wider Europe"

White Hall, Presidential Palace, Vilnius, November 29, 2002

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you in Lithuania. We are truly honored with this opportunity to extend our hospitality and appreciation to you, our friends and supporters from all over Europe.

In particular, I would like to thank the Bertelsmann Foundation and you, Professor Doctor Weidenfeld, for the decision to have this important conference here in Vilnius. Already it is more than a decade that we have worked together and pursued our shared goals successfully.

I do remember the important conferences in Berlin, in Warsaw, and the seminars that were arranged, with your help, in Lithuania. I also hope that our cooperation will continue, since the ongoing European integration process offers more and more new challenging topics for our discussion.

This particular conference, starting tonight, is indeed timely and welcome. It takes place at a time of crucial importance to Lithuania and, at the precise moment when the decisions that will have a profound impact on the future architecture of Europe are being made.

Just a few days ago, Lithuania was invited to join the North Atlantic Alliance. We also enjoyed the official visit by the President of the United States George W. Bush, who underlined the point that Lithuania now is part of a wide union and never again will have to stand alone.

In a very short time, we expect another invitation to be issued in Copenhagen, an invitation which will offer us membership in the European Union.

Thus, this conference provides us with a unique opportunity to evaluate these transformations, as well as to draw guidelines for Europe's further development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Confidence is a great value. As long as we are confident in our goals, no one can stop us. I have no doubts that today Lithuania, and other candidate countries, are sure of the road they have chosen. Moreover, the recent and forthcoming decisions about enlargement of the Transatlantic Alliance and of the European Union have reinforced our confidence and resolve.

In tomorrow's discussions, you will consider possible ways for developing closer ties between formerly divided and antagonistic regions. Yet, in this context, I want to point out the unique, unprecedented setting in which now all these processes are taking place. Our continent is finally free of dividing lines. What we do have, however, are underutilized opportunities. And we continue discovering, as part of European integration process, these new opportunities.

Let me give you a few examples. A decade ago hardly anyone would have believed that Lithuania and Poland could become such close friends and strategic partners. Who could have believed that all countries, which had just liberated from the communist oppression, would make such great strides in social and economic fields?

Above all, who could have believed that Russia would become part of our democratic European vision.

All these opportunities had been here for years, but who had the vision and courage to find them? Enlargement of both the European Union and NATO helped us to open our eyes. And the more we consider the idea of a Wider Europe, the more it seems realistic.

The ability to put visions in practice is a great quality that is absolutely needed in the twenty-first century Europe.

I am proud that this quality is part of Lithuania's national character. Over a decade ago, we were told that our hopes about independence were over-optimistic.

Some years ago, we were told exactly the same about our aspirations to join the European Union and NATO. However, optimism and determination has never abandoned us and encouraged us to reach for the impossible.

This relationship between vision and implementation is indeed crucial to our life's philosophy. This conference is going straight to the heart of this. Let us put it this way: Is a Wider Europe something inconceivable, something that only a few optimists are persistently trying to impose on our agendas?

I don't think so.

Kaliningrad is just a case in point. The vision of Lithuania - and, I sincerely believe, also of the European Union - is to have Russia in Europe. Kaliningrad has become a litmus test of our ability to put this vision in practice.

I am confident that this project will work out. Because if it doesn't, we all will lose. During this decade, Lithuania has been closely involved in developing new models of partnership in the Baltic Sea region. And tonight I very am glad to have among us the Russian representatives dealing directly with the Kaliningrad issue.

I take this as a sign of ever-growing commitment of Russia and of willingness to solve this issue on the terms acceptable to all parties.

Recently, Lithuania has increased its links with Ukraine, because our vision of a wider Europe would be incomplete without this great country. We have started to build joint institutions to encourage the Ukrainian transition by sharing our knowledge, our experience, and values that are common to all Europeans.

Lithuania also looks forward to increasing cooperation with other regions. Our experience should provide a significant contribution to the common goals of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that tomorrow you will address all these topics in greater detail. It is important that we exchange and debate ideas, it is imperative that we build a shared vision.

May I wish you, constructive and fruitful discussions in this complicated and challenging endeavor.

Thank you.

Security for a Wider Europe

Carl Bildt

*Remarks at a Conference "Building Wider Europe"
Vilnius, 30th November 2002*

As we meet here in Vilnius in between the NATO Summit in Prague and the European Council in Copenhagen, it is only appropriate that we reflect on the significance of what has happened as well as on the issues that lies ahead.

It's less than ten years ago that I had reason CD talk about "the Baltic litmus test" for the new Europe that started to emerge. We had seen the collapse both of the outer Soviet empire and of the Soviet Union itself- but it was still very uncertain where we were really heading.

My thesis was that the situation of the three Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia constituted a litmus test for relations between Russia and the rest of Europe, and that these relations were of key importance for the creation of new European order of peace and prosperity.

Historically, this had been the role of this region. Historically part of the fracture zone between different spheres of influence, religions beliefs and natural interests in Europe, any tremors of any significant change in Europe has been noticed here before they have been noticed elsewhere, and much too often the region has had to suffer the consequences of its position between Russia and other major European powers.

The modern drama of this region takes its beginning with the collusion between Hitler and Stalin in August of 1939.

The Western powers had been refusing to give Stalin a free hand in the Baltic region, and accordingly talks between them and Moscow on a common front against Nazi Germany had collapsed. But Hitler had no such qualms. The division of Eastern Europe and the Baltic region was easily agreed, paving the way for the beginning of the Second World War, the ending of the independence of the three-Baltic countries and the horrible tragedies that were to follow as deportations, genocide and war swept over these countries.

At the end of the Second World War, Soviet power along the Baltic coast reached the outskirts of the city of Luebeck, sealed and secured by a massive military presence in the hearth of Germany. Beyond the Iron Curtain that descended - from Stettin to Trieste, according to the words of Winston Churchill - the sterile structures of the socialists systems laid waste to nations, societies and cultures during no less than half a century.

At the end of the day, the Soviet system, after having destroyed so much, destroyed itself as well. It had repressed the creative freedom necessary in order to rejuvenate any society or economy. Stagnation lead to decay, and decay paved die way for the destruction that carne.

It was then that the people of Lithuania saw its possibility of regaining its freedom. Sajudis wrote itself into the history of not only this nation, bur of Europe itself, during the dramatic years in the later part of the 1980's The name of Vytautas Landsbergis belongs to the historic names of that historic period of transition.

It was here that the communist ideologies had to confront the fact that the socialist system not in anyway had solved the nationalities issue, as it had claimed, but on the contrary had aggravated. And it was here that the attempt to use outright force to turn events back, and meet the demands for change, failed during the dramatic days of January 1991.

As wholeheartedly as we then welcomed the restoration of the independence of Lithuania and other countries, as concerned had we the duty to be concerning the future stability of Europe. In the Balkans, we had just seen the brute force and open brutality of nationalism running amok, and history had taught us that a Europe without an organizing principle accepted by all its main powers was likely to fall back into instability, disorder and, at the end of the day, even war.

The task some of us started to discuss during those years was the creation of a federation of nation states, encompassing virtually all of Europe to the West of Russia and the Ukraine, for its security anchored in the alliance across the Atlantic, and for its future also dependent on an increasingly close cooperation with Russia.

This, then, was our vision a decade ago. And now, in between Prague and Copenhagen meetings, we are perhaps half the way towards the realization of that vision, and thus to a true new order of peace and prosperity in Europe.

Then, not many were prepared to speak about the three Baltic countries as members of either the evolving European Union or a NATO that was struggling to find its new *raison d'être*. And there were certainly reasons for Washington to view the priority to its relations to Moscow, as well as for key European countries to view the prospects of the fragile, reborn states along the shores of the Baltic with a certain amount of scepticism.

It was then that I talked about "the Baltic litmus test". In all simplicity it said that we would not succeed with what we were trying to do in Europe as a whole - Russia included - if we did not succeed in securing the position of the three Baltic states.

If they were left in a grey zone of uncertainty, there was an obvious risk that history would repeat itself, that new speculations and manoeuvres at some point would be invited and that there would have been left a room for future forces of revanchism. This could, at some point, lead to situations that were bound to destabilize large parts of Europe and to endanger not the least the possibilities for a good relationship with the emerging new democratic Russia.

The later point is worth stressing, since it was not always fully understood. For reasons very well anchored in the history of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries, many here saw and see security as first and foremost a security against Russia. But from the wider European as well as Atlantic view, it is also a question of security with Russia - without there being any contradiction between the two.

Had there been a grey area of uncertainty left between Russia and the European and Atlantic structures of integration, this would have risked creating a less open and tolerant climate in these countries, at the same time as it would have risked creating an incentive for manoeuvres by possible reactionaries and revanchists in Russia, and the combination of these two developments risking the creation of a zone of instability and uncertainty that would have seriously impaired also the relationship between the West and Russia.

Today, these debates are behind us. That they were won, against those that cautioned that taking the Baltic nations into either NATO or the European Union would be too risky, is dependent primarily on the efforts of internal reform undertaken in your own countries.

By proving your democratic maturity, as well your commitment to coherent reform policies, and - particularly in the case of Latvia and Estonia - conforming with high European standards as set by the OSCE for the protection of minorities, you proved your credentials in a way that lead the doubters and the detractors to gradually fade away.

Today, Lithuania has been invited to become a member of NATO, and is on the verge of completing its negotiations for accession to the European Union.

After ratification in a large number of countries, not the least Lithuania itself, by May 1st of 2004, you will fully join the then 25 members of the European Union and the then 26 members of the North Atlantic Alliance. In June 2004, you will be electing your members of the European Parliament.

Then, we are perhaps half of the way towards our vision of a Europe free and whole, democratic and dynamic. Now, we have every reason to discuss the tasks that lie ahead of us in Europe itself.

Security issues now are fundamentally different from security issues in the past.

In the past, we sought to prevent war through military deterrence, while in the future we seek to secure peace through economic and political integration within and between our different states.

We are no longer threatened primarily by the armies of occupation, but by the forces of strife and conflict that might arise out of the multitude of nations, traditions and historical interpretations throughout Europe.

Thus, to promote the processes of integration, and to build the structures that bridge the possible conflicts, within and across the borders of Europe, remains an ongoing obligation for all of us.

We have to recognize that the threat we have to deal with is our past and ourselves. Europe has not been a continent of harmony - but a continent of conflict. To contain and to overcome all the sources of conflict coming out of our past is a task for generations.

Although NATO will be vital element of these our efforts, our main instrument for this historical task is and will remain the European Union.

During next year, we will all be involved in the discussions concerning the first true constitutional treaty - de facto constitution - of the vast federation of nation states of Europe, trying to reconcile the sometimes conflicting demands of efficiency and legitimacy of our new democratic structures of integration.

And during the years to come, the zone covered by the common currency of the Euro will gradually expand-Sweden will hold its referendum on joining the Euro on September 14 next year - as

will the zone covered by the Schengen agreement on complete freedom of movement. The intention is also to achieve a very significant integration of the financial markets of Europe. Together, these measures will bring the economies and societies of all of our countries significantly closer together, thus promoting both peace and prosperity.

Although there are remaining issues of concern in this more northerly or central part of Europe - Vilnius is sometimes claimed to be the geographical center of Europe - most of the difficult security challenges that we will have to face are in the more southern and south-eastern direction.

From Bihac in Bosnia in the northwest to Basra on the Persian Gulf in the southeast, we face a number of challenges issues related to the post-Ottoman order of this part of Europe. From the issue of Kosovo to the issue of Kurdistan, issues of integration or disintegration will once more test our political wisdom and our determination and bring questions of war or peace to the forefront of our deliberations.

In between the issues of Kosovo and Kurdistan lies now the issue of Cyprus. Bitterly divided by the conflict of 1974, it now faces the crucial question whether it can be brought together again as part of the wider process of European integration. The Secretary-General of the United Nations have asked the Greeks Cypriots as well as the Turk Cypriots to give their comments to his detailed peace plan as of the evening of today, thus making it possible to evaluate whether it will be possible to move forward with overcoming the divisions of this island.

If that is the case-or if that is not the case-will have vast ramifications for the situation in the entire area of the Eastern Mediterranean, stretching from the conflicts of the Balkans to the uncertainties of Mesopotamia. And it will influence our possibilities of overcoming present or potential similar conflicts in that wider and highly complex area, including the future of Iraq.

The "green line" that divides Nicosia might seem far away from a Vilnius still celebrating the invitation to join NATO. But I believe it is important that we recognize the nature of the threats to our instability that are still there in Europe, the complexity of the solutions that might be necessary and the pivotal role that our processes of integration - European and Atlantic, often acting in concert with Russia - can and must play in overcoming them.

If we are successful in Cyprus, it will increase our possibilities to move forward with the outstanding issues in the region to the south of Slovenia and to the north of Greece. Here, the absence of war is securing by a large presence of forces under and in cooperation with NATO, but as key issues of the conflicts of the past are still open, we have to understand that all the issues of the region are potentially still open, thus undermining the possibilities of even a true process of integration. The steps now taken between Serbia and Montenegro to forge a new relationship are positive although still uncertain, and on the issue of Kosovo there is as of yet not even the possibility of a dialogue between Belgrade and Pnshtina.

Beyond in geographic terms, but before in chronological terms, comes the important issue of Turkey, now the subject of an intense debate throughout Europe. In the past few weeks, we have had a past President of France saying that Turkey could never be a member of the European Union, while the present President of France has expressed his hope that one day it will. We see similar divisions in most countries.

Already today, Turkey has an economy on a level with countries that are almost certain to be members of the European Union within the next few years. That cannot be the issue. But the country is certainly different from other candidate countries in three significant respects.

It is different in possible being as large as the presently largest member country by the time a membership can take place, in being an independent strategic actor of significance in crucial region and not the least in representing a cultural and religious heritage different from the one in most of our other countries.

I belong to those that believe that it is important primarily for the peace and stability of Europe and our more immediate neighborhood in the south and the southeast that we continue to encourage the modernization of Turkey and the building of a truly secular democratic states, certainly not renouncing its Muslim heritage, but instead becoming a beacon for those that will take up the cause of modernization and democracy in other Muslim states, be they in our more direct vicinity, or be they further afar.

So far, we are not in the "clash of civilization" that Samuel Huntington talked about. But neither do have we the right to overlook the dangers of us sliding into such a situation, not of neglecting to do whatever we can to prevent this from happening. Our task must be to spread the lessons of ethnic and national integration, of open democracy and of the secular rule of the law to more and more countries.

For the European Union, the coming issues of enlargement are thus defined. Every European nation that is a democracy and fulfils the criteria has the right to become member of the European Union. There are no exceptions.

But membership will be increasingly demanding. And that has consequences. I do not belong to those that believe that it is likely that Russia in the foreseeable future will be prepared to accept to share sovereignty over key aspects of domestic as well as foreign affairs in the way that membership of the EU entails.

Whether the Ukraine will be prepared to do it will be up to the political system of the Ukraine itself in the years to come to answer. In the even longer perspective, the same might apply for Belarus and Moldova, although the present regime of Belarus, and the difficult situation of Moldova, puts them well beyond any considerations of this sort.

For NATO, the issues of enlargement are both easier and more difficult. Its integration is far less demanding than that of the European Union, making a process of enlargement far easier and far faster. But the flip side of this is the risk that enlargement will quickly take the Alliance into more and more challenging regions.

Just to take two examples:

It seems difficult to consider a membership of the Ukraine in NATO without seriously considering a membership of Russia, and it seems difficult to contemplate a membership of Russia without contemplating all aspects of the challenges of safeguarding key borders in Central Asia, Siberia and the Pacific area.

And it seems equally difficult to consider the membership of Georgia and Azerbaijan in NATO without being ready to assume a more direct responsibility for the numerous present and potential conflicts of the area between the Black and the Caspian Seas and between Russia on the one hand and Turkey and Iran on the other.

I'm not saying that it can never be done. But I'm stressing that it raises issues even more challenging than those of the two rounds of enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance we have seen so far.

While the issues are discussed over the years ahead, we should move forward with cooperation and integration in this part of Europe.

The issue of the future of Kaliningrad is obviously of particular importance, with the authorities of the Russian Federation having the key responsibility for improving the future economic prospects of the region, but with us ready to give the help we can give.

I also believe we will have reason to address a series of important and complex energy issues — gas, oil, transport infrastructure, nuclear - far more seriously than we have done so far.

And I do hope that the upcoming 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg will both serve to promote further economic reforms in that important part of Russia and to highlight the new possibilities that the enlargement not the least of the European Union —with a million Russian nationals becoming citizens of the Union —opens up for the promotion of trade and other economic links.

It has been a dramatic and profoundly important decade. I do believe that we all—Russia, the United States, the countries of the European Union, and not the least the Baltic countries themselves - have passed that "litmus test" that we were somewhat uncertain of during those years.

That is a truly tremendous achievement. But the tasks that lie ahead of us are no less important.

We are only half the way towards that new order of peace and security that we have a sacred duty to future generations to create.

European Convention and the Future of Europe

Elmar Brok

Remarks at a Conference "Building Wider Europe"

Vilnius, 30th November 2002

I would like to concentrate on "model 3 integration" and I would like to talk about the present state and the aims of the Convention. The constitutional process of the EU that we have at the moment is as a part of a preparation for enlargement, but also because of the weaknesses EU has even without enlargement in these constitutional questions. Therefore, I think we have to give answers to questions like effectiveness, transparency, including democracy and the rule of law. But we must also have in mind what are the political aims of the European Union.

First of all, we have to give credibility and effectiveness to the European Union after the enlargement as a broader zone of stability, compared to the present situation. And we have to remind ourselves how this zone of stability invested in Europe was achieved, and what should have normally been achieved to Central and Eastern Europe?

I think the point is very easy, but very seldom discussed. It's a question that EU is based on a common legal order, and that this is a way to solve conflicts between states and peoples, as we used to do it before in states via parliaments, via laws, via common court. The Monet system is the system to solve conflicts between states. And I think this is a difference with all other alliances in the history of mankind. Via this system we have achieved peace among EU members. It is not just a question of a threat from outside. But to keep peace among members as a result of our historical experience. We have learnt that to achieve our interests we have to be together, because every one of us is too small to achieve these interests alone in today's globalised world. I want to repeat what Prime Minister of Luxembourg Jean-Claude Juncker once said: "Though I am coming from a small country, but from the view from Washington all European countries are small". The smaller countries understand that quickly, bigger ones need more time to find that out, but they are in the same situation. Therefore, it is important to have constitutional framework to be able to pool our strengths for sovereignty in order to go for a common interest worldwide. And I think this is the main goal of the Convention, where the candidate countries are playing already a full role. This is a Laeken mechanism - a formula which says that they cannot destroy the consensus, but in this Convention it is never a vote and the participants of the candidate countries have the same rights and influences as all other members. It is very important that candidate countries can play the role in order to find the result that can work for this broader zone of stability. And that the result is accepted afterwards. Because anyway the result has to be ratified in candidate countries. And therefore the full political participation should follow in IGC. I believe that this might be the basis to have ratification of this IGC, which is to be finished at the end of 2003, that a new Constitution to be in power from the January 2005, just a few months after the enlargement became effective.

In my opinion, it is very clear that this Convention would go for a full-fledged Constitution. There will be no options. The Convention will give to the Heads of States a foil-fledged Constitution in order to diminish the possibilities for changes. And because in this Convention there are many members of National Parliaments - [they are the biggest group in this Convention - this result will have a legitimacy, which would make it very difficult for government to come to major changes. And I have to say that I know much more positive and optimistic about the outcome, I twice took part as a representative of European Parliament in the conferences or Amsterdam, and Nice. And the question that we debated for months and months, and years and years, we were not able to solve in these diplomatic conferences. We have solved these questions in the first part of the Constitution already. It is absolutely understandable that the EU should have a single legal personality. And that the pillar structure should be abolished. It is absolutely clear as a consensus that a Charter of Fundamental Rights should be part of the Constitution legally binding. It is absolutely clear that the co-decision mechanism between the Council and the Parliament is a law-making procedure for every legislation. And that the Qualified majority voting and the new system of voting within the Council is better than the Nice one should be the end product. It is nearly revolutionary of what is going on in the system. And even Tony Blair said two days ago in his speech that the Council as legislator is to meet public to become the real second Chamber. And with this altogether of what is already known, or at least agreed, we have made a major progress. Further, we have an agreement of the strengthening of the subsidiary system and the possibility that not only national governments but also national parliaments

should have a right of "early" warning, and when the Commission comes out with a legal proposal and national parliaments can say: "no we cannot accept it, and we have to consider it". And if the legislation is done, exposed also national parliament can go to the Court of Justice in order to check whether this directive is threatening or violating the principle of subsidiarity. So it is very important that national parliaments can have a feeling that they have a foot on the brake if they believe that the EU goes over its competencies. And that means that we are discussing how regions should play a role in this process. This would mean a progress for national parliaments. But we also understand ... (*inaudible*) to set up new bodies, like political subsidiarity body, or third Chamber, or something like that. We do not want to have new bodies, but we want to have a clear order of competencies, we want to have a clear-cut understanding, who is responsible for what, and we want not to mix up levels. But this would mean that national parliament must be strengthened in their role of controlling a government as a member of the Council. This can only be done partly on the European level. And mostly it is the responsibility of the constitutional settings of every member country. But especially a lot of countries in the Baltic area give a positive sign of how this aim can be achieved. And if I hear from one or two countries that a special body must be set up on European level, I must say that in these countries national parliaments control the governments in the European affairs in every role, and I understand such governments to put them on the European level to keep them away from home. But I think that this situation, which is sometimes the anglo-franco problem, is detected and will not have results at the end of the day. And then we have an agreement on competence order. There will be not written in the Constitution which competencies a nation state has, because every competence that is not given to the EU is automatically a competence of a member state. And it is very important that a member state is a basis of everything in this question. And on the European level, we have three types of competencies: the own competence, the shared competence, and the supplementary competence. And in the supplementary competence, the EU has no right of harmonisation. Education, culture, which should in principle be national competencies, but where the EU could be in complimentary help. Then we have the real problems - which institution should do what. And I think, the main battle will be the question of the Presidents. Will there be on the Council side an executive President? This would be a final stroke in favour of the intergovernmentality. Or will there be a clear-cut situation that the administration, executive responsibility for the Union, is within the Commission. My political family has decided for the second part. So, very-broad majority, And I have a feeling that many members of the Convention are on that side.

My prediction is that the President of the Commission will be strengthened; and I can believe, that proposed by the Council and approved by the European Parliament or the other way around - this is not yet decided - there might be a compromise at the end of the day - the President of the Commission is a Chairman of the General Council for example. Everything is done in the mechanism of the Commission in the way of approving, dismissal and accountability. If such compromise is to come around, it might be helpful in the present debate and in the Hanna group on foreign policy shows already this direction, and I think that the next week there will be an official proposal that there will be a double hat Foreign Relations Commissioner High Representative, someone who is in the Commission but has also the hat of High Representative. The fight will be not around this type of merger. The fight will be that for the first day on all the operative administration, part of the Commission or not. There is a question between effectiveness and realism. It is one of the seldom debates that will be used as an argument realism is not effective. Everybody understands that. In this discussion it is a little bit fun, but if we have only one Administration and not the competition between administrations, we can come to positive results. There always should come to result that we do not have competing administrations on different sides, and I believe that at the end of the day the need of effectiveness will bring us to the positive results. If we achieve this on the level of foreign policy, I think there will be already to 50 per cent decision for an overall mechanism, which will mean that it is a strengthening of the present system to be more effective and have on the Council's side better mechanisms for continuity. This is not a question just for foreign affairs. The question is for economic governance. The present situation is ridiculous. The EU in economic affairs is not a council but it is run by the committee which does not exist legally, and sometimes is run by the president of such a council which cannot be a council under the formulas of the community because the active president is not the member of the monetary union. And I think that this present system is not acceptable in a way of effectiveness and accountability. And I also think this will be part of the overall battle of the so called pillar questions.

Let me conclude with one word. When we have the decision of the 11th of December to enlarge the EU by 10 member countries, and I believe because of the opportunistic and other reasons that there will be a rendezvous clause is Turkey despite the lack of fulfilling the criteria of Copenhagen. We will have a very broad debate in our populations about the future borders of Europe. And we have to find an answer to that, that our people would not run away from the European idea because they cannot see how far it will go. And therefore we have to consider whether something is possible like it was European Economic Area. EEA plus external and internal security for countries that for a moment cannot become members of the EU, should not or do not want to do so. And I think that partly is an answer to the countries like Moldova, Ukraine, some of the Balkan states - be a part of the multilateral relations to the EU, so that the full membership is not the only option EU has to give to its neighbours. And I believe that perhaps Turkey could be also part of that, but that must be answered by high authorities.

Stability and Security in an Enlarged Europe

Per Carlsen

Remarks at a Conference „Building Wider Europe”

Vilnius, 30th November 2002

INTRODUCTION

Ladies and Gentleman

I have been given the opportunity to speak to you about the future of European security, an opportunity for which I am most pleased. I will begin my speech by touching upon some of the new security issues of present day and what remedies we might have at our disposal.

NEW THREATS

The world is facing new kinds of asymmetric threats. Global terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the existence of rough or failed States that destabilise entire regions are all examples of such new threats. There are several hotspots around the globe that demands our attention. Areas such as the Middle East, North Africa and the Caucasus are going through political and social transitions of historical dimensions. This transition will not be easy and there is a potential risk of spillover since instability will not be confined to the areas in which it originates. All these facts work against the traditional understanding of geography as the main source of protection.

Since the horrible events of September 11th much has been done to combat these threats. The removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was the first tangible result of the international coalition against terror and clearly shows the potential danger of failed states supporting terrorism and the like.

TERRORISM

Terror is not just a new threat but has been around for decades. What is new is the means of terror, in form of mass kidnappings and suicide missions. The fact that the terrorist of today, doesn't fear the loss of their own life's or deliberately sacrifices themselves in their operations, making the problem a lot more complicated than previous incidents of terror. Terrorism used to be about getting peoples attention and not about causing mass slaughter, as we have seen in the attacks of the World Trade Centre, the bombing of the USS Cole and the recent attack on the Moscow theatre. These terrorists doesn't refrain from using themselves as deadly suicide bombs putting innocent lives at risk in order to accomplish their goals whatever they might be.

Present day asymmetric threats are taking full advantage of the technologies of the modern society in order to sustain a truly global network, therefore must our response be comprehensive in a way that allows us to keep the upper hand in this deadly game.

NATO ENLARGED - STABILITY VS. SECURITY.

With the newly enlarged NATO we face a new a range of issues. How is the relationship between stability and security, what are the implications of the enlargement as regards to the alliances ability to provide efficient security?

One could argue that a further enlargement of NATO would jeopardise the efficiency of the alliance, since too many states, with too many different views of dealing with problems, would be involved in the solution. On the other hand, further enlargement of NATO to include more countries would mean an increase in European stability and a closer co-operation between countries on security matters. This is a delicate balancing act with an uncertain outcome. NATO therefor faces both an external problem, in form of the before mentioned threats, as well as an

internal problem, consisting on "how to cope" with the institutional reform and the overall change of focus that has taken place during recent years within the organisation.

EU - NATO MUTUAL REINFORCEMENT

How can we combat terrorism? The fight on terror must be fought on many fronts. Purely military means are not sufficient to deal with the problems of terror, we must instead employ a truly multivector strategy that seeks to cover the many aspects of modern society that might be challenged by terrorism.

Two of the most important tools at our disposal are the EU and NATO. NATO's Prague capabilities commitment, and the EU's headline goal, are essential components for a strong security community both inside and outside Europe.

The EU and NATO demonstrated a will to take a broader responsibility when co-operating on solving the emerging crisis in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

NATO is now incorporating 7 new member states, together with the previously admitted states of Poland, the Czech republic and Hungary, the alliance now includes 9 former Eastblock members. It's my belief that NATO will gain from this accession, and it has certainly changed the way we perceive threats in Europe. The threat of instability and war is no longer coming from the eastern part of Europe, but rather from outside Europe in forms of failed states, terrorism, international crime and massive waves of refugees fleeing a hopeless and uncertain future. Many of these problems pass through what was the former Eastblock, which underlines the importance of a tight border controls and enhanced intelligence across Europe.

EU and NATO can play a mutual role in solving these problems. The EU has got extensive capabilities and experiences in the field of soft security and combined with the effective command structure and military expertise of NATO, we possess a valuable tool in remedying the conflicts of today and tomorrow.

This said however, there are still areas where further improvement is badly needed.

CAPABILITIES GAP

In order for us to be successful in solving the conflicts of today adequate force projection is vital for success. The NATO interventions in Kosovo and Afghanistan have revealed a considerable lack of modern equipment among the European members of the alliance leaving it to the Americans to do all the demanding high tech jobs.

This capability gap poses a very real threat to the cohesiveness of the alliance. Europe must improve its military capabilities, or else the European partners risk not being taken seriously by our American partners - the integrity and effectiveness of NATO will suffer as a result of such a demise in trust.

NATO needs forces that are slimmer, tougher and faster, forces that can stay in the field for a longer period of time. The traditional army of both West and Eastern Europe, with its vast numbers of heavy tanks, artillery and men, are no longer needed. The security threats of today demands highly specialised troops that can be moved around the globe in a matter of days or weeks, not months. In this aspect the Europeans are lagging behind their American counterparts.

Europe needs to improve its airlift capacities and develop more specialised units in order to make a difference in international security matters and keeping up with the Americans.

Military capabilities are crucial for our security, since it directly translates into political credibility. And without political credibility NATO is without influence and purpose in the international system.

Many of the alliance members are small states that can not bare the burden of acquiring all the aspects of modern warfare. The solution to this problem comes in part from specialisation. The small states in Europe, need to find their own speciality, or niche if you like, working together with the other alliance members to form a complete response. In the future one could imagine a military consisting of only 2 branches instead of the traditional 3 (army, navy, airforce), but with a higher degree of specialisation and modern weaponry.

On this particular point, the old members of the alliance can learn a valuable lesson from some of the new members. The Baltic States are a fine example of how to build up a modern military structure from scratch with only limited funds to do so. The Baltic States share some aspects of their defences, such as air surveillance (BALNET), officers training (BALDEFCOL) as well as their participation in international peacekeeping missions in the Balkans (BALBAT).

INVOLVING RUSSIA

Russia is playing a major role in the future European security framework. The establishment of a NATO - Russia council is a great step towards enhanced co-operation in Europe. NATO no longer sees Russia as part of the problem, but rather as part of the solution. Differences aside, Russia faces the same problems as we do. As we have seen recently with the Moscow tragedy where terrorism once again showed its atrocious face.

In the future one could imagine Russia participating in operations under NATO leadership, or maybe even the establishment of a NATO - Russian rapid reaction force that could be deployed at a global scale if needed.

Keeping Russia close to Europe is important but Russia needs to be part of the process and not just a passive bystander. There is an urgent need in Russia for military reform. The Russian military is overdimensioned and without a clear focus, still reflecting the real ides of yesterday rather than those of tomorrow. Before Russia can enter into a meaningful military relationship with the west, these issues needs co be addressed.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your time, it has been a pleasure addressing you on these issues today in the lovely city of Vilnius. I hope that you will all enjoy the remaining of the conference as much as I have enjoyed it so far.

Russia in a Wider Europe

Grigory Yavlinsky

Remarks at a Conference Building Wider Europe"

Vilnius, 30th November 2002

I express my gratitude to the President of Lithuania Mr. Valdas Adamkus and Lithuanian Government and the Bertelsmann Foundation for the possibility to speak to such an audience and to share with you the most important things about die security in Europe and in the world.

This conference surely underlines the openness and new spirit of Vilnius that was discussed yesterday and today in the beginning of die conference. I think that this conference can prove it.

The very fact that we Starr our discussion after this very interesting overview that was given by Carl Bildt shows that Russia is really important in the European and global security, as well as how difficult and how complicated is the case of Russia and security in Europe.

As for today, I would like to stress that since the last presidential elections there has happened the most dramatic, the most deep change in the area of security in Russia. I would say, the most visible and the most difficult change.

The fact that the West is not the enemy of Russia is coming slowly, step by step, into the Russian political thinking and the Russian elite. It's a very serious change in Russian mind, and this is a very difficult step from the point of view of the new President. If you look back, only two years back before the 11th of September, for example, the symbol of Russian foreign policy was the bulletproof train with the Chairman of North Korea travelling around Russia for two months.

Now Russia has completely changed its political mentality. For hundreds of years the West was the main enemy of Russia. Not any more. And this change is very significant. Real facts support this opinion. Because the position taken by the President Putin after the 11th of September to join antiterrorist actions, especially in the operation in Afghanistan, shows the practical results, and now we can rely on very practical things which are happening around Russia. It was a very strategic decision of the Russian President to solve important problems of the Russian security with the 100 per cent help from the side of the USA. It was maybe the first time in the Russian history that the tough problems of the Russian security were solved with the help of someone else. If you remember the mid 2000, the Russian government was considering the decision to bomb Afghanistan because of the terrorist camps were located in Afghanistan. So that was an unprecedented decision taken by the President and when the absolute majority of the Russian political elite was not on that side. These developments certainly change Russian relations with the key players in the world security and first of all with the US, NATO and the EU.

If Russia wants to be a part of Europe, a member of the European Union, [be it in 10 years] it is absolutely crucial for Russia to establish a new kind of relations with the USA. The door to Europe for Russia is in Washington, whether somebody likes it or not. That means that Europe has well-established relations with the US. Although there are some difficulties for the moment, but well-established relations is a fundamental thing. If Russia wants to have close and workable relations and wants to be a member of European security, political and economic system - Russia has to establish transparent, clear and fundamental relations with the US. Precisely, what Russia is doing after the 11th of September. We all have to be very sensitive to the difficulties which we have in this area, because it is clear for everybody that the US is the country that is taking not only the first place in the area of political, economic and military possibilities, but, I would put it in such a way- is taking the first, second, third... all top ten places in the military, political and economic areas in the world. And that must be accepted and understood well.

To play the game that divides Europe and the USA - to play with Europe against the USA, or with the USA against Europe - is counterproductive. But that used to be the Russian policy for 50 years. And what Russia and Europe should do at the moment, is not to play anti-American cards but try to find intellectual arguments, and in the disputes and in the discussions try to push the US policy away from unilateral decisions and from attempts to act in isolation.

The other issue, which I think is extremely important, is the Russian-NATO relation. You can see that Russia acts in a very positive way in regard to NATO expansion, differently from what Russia was doing even 2 or 3 years ago. First of all, the Russian political elite has a very

positive experience with those countries that became NATO members 3 and half years ago. Look at the Russian-Polish relations - they are much better now than they were before Poland became a member of NATO. We expect the same analogy with the Baltic States and their membership in NATO. In a way, for psychological reasons [those psychological reasons are very important in politics]. Next, we all understand that NATO as a structure has many problems. It became clear especially after the events of 11th of September: NATO's inability to act in the operations in Afghanistan in the same way the Americans were acting. It is a long story to discuss the reforms and changes necessary for NATO. But it is worth discussing. These are very special topics. We see new responsibilities for NATO, a new NATO role in Europe, and the military challenges, especially in European countries, balance between the economic possibilities and military needs.

Now I am coming to the Russian-European relations. First of all, Russia is establishing its relations with the US in order to find its place in Europe. Russia has to have very developed relations with Europe in all areas - economic, political, security. Regarding security. For a very long time we had discussions about the security system in Europe. It seems to me and to some outstanding Russian political thinkers that security system is a system which prevents war in Europe. But not any more. And we now would advocate a common security agenda. This is our key proposal for this conference - to start discussing common security agenda between Russia and Europe. The common security agenda includes the common timetable in reaching the security goals, and a common 'road map' to the security goals for Europe and for Russia. What are the common security threats? There are 3 of them. First of all - terrorism. The real activities in this area have already started. In the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, the activities on the Russian-European anti-missile defence system have already started. For these steps we have been advocating since 1998. It is an extremely powerful step because it integrates not in words, but in deeds. And it uses the Russian territory and Russian military possibilities. This must be one of the priorities in a common security agenda. The second issue that must be one of the priorities - is the security control of airspace. Third, we have to understand that Russia has the longest borders in the world with the most unstable regions. And I dare to say that Europe has to understand that those no longer are just Russian borders, they are European borders. It does not matter if Russia formally is a member of the EU, or not. The border in the Central Asia, border with Caucasus, with China is not only a Russian border. And I am going to repeat a common task. No country in Europe would afford to secure these borders. Only Russia and Europe - all together in the long run, step by step can create a space of security on these borders.

And this is an answer to the question - what is a future role of Russia in the war against terrorism? I would say the formula is simple: a stronger Russia - less terrorism, a weaker Russia - more threats from the terrorism. One more remark: it is important not to be very excited with the war against terrorism. It must be very well balanced between human rights, freedoms on one side and fight against terrorism on the other side. Otherwise in the war we can lose the goals and values in the name of which we are fighting. I want to say, look what is going on: every country now has its own list of its own favourite terrorists. That means that governments use war against terrorism as a political instrument to solve the problems that are very far from real terrorism. And they are using it against political and other opposition - everybody who expresses separatist ideas are declared as terrorists. So, everybody must be very cautious. But anyhow we have to say that freedom and human rights are the main values for which we are fighting. Terrorists have only technical limitations, and we have the limitations of laws, our democratic values and our liberal views. We have to follow that, and not to forget it. So, in terms of security, besides the terrorism there are other issues - nationalism, xenophobia, illegal migration, etc. - all these issues are very important security issues for Europe. With our entire positive attitude towards the European Union enlargement, with all our understanding and acceptance of the expanding of NATO, I want to say that Russia is more and more in isolation. Now to go to Poland, to Czech Republic or Hungary [I am not talking about Baltic States - it is a completely different story] we need visas like visiting Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, etc. And that is a real problem. Look at the embassies - people are standing for hours, for weeks to get a visa, especially it is tough with the newcomers, as these countries want to show that they are very important. And bureaucracies in these countries want to show that they are more important than the ones in such "unimportant" countries like Germany. We understand Europeans who want to be secure from the Russian Mafia

and gangsters, but I want to assure you that none of those gangsters are standing in the line for a visa. How gangsters get visas, governments have to ask their embassies. "We want to say that it is necessary to make steps as soon as possible. We are partly satisfied what has been achieved with Kaliningrad. But it is not the main issue, it is a practical issue. The main issue is that a Russian who has a passport has the right to visit Europe, just as Argentinians or Japanese, or Colombians. We understand that we are not prepared for that, that we have many internal problems - in bureaucracy, in Russian foreign affairs, in the ministries, on borders, etc. But I think that it is the right time to include a timetable to solve these problems. This would be a part of the new common security agenda to resist nationalism, xenophobia, and to increase co-operation and integration. And the last but not the least issue in the security area is ecology. It is one of the most important security issues. I would like to draw your attention that now Russia "imports" nuclear waste from all over the world. It would be too late if not discussed thoroughly now. What kind of new threats that would create?

To finalise all that, I think that it would be a good practical step of this conference to put on the table a common security agenda for Russia and Europe, and a common security timetable, and to work out this agenda in the next year. We are ready for this agenda. We do not want to please somebody. It is our vital interest to move to this direction.

Thank you very much.

Challenges and Opportunities for Kaliningrad in an Enlarged Europe

Vladimir Yegorov

*Remarks at a Conference "Building Wider Europe"
Vilnius, 30th November 2002*

I would like to thank the convenors of this Conference and its participants for the presented opportunity to take part at this event and make a report.

I think that within the framework of the European integration, the situation of the Kaliningrad oblast is undergoing a cardinal change, and before long we will find ourselves fully surrounded by states that enter into the European Union, states that are included into the area of NATO, the Euro zone and the Schengen area. In the Russian-EU Summit in Brussels, the Kaliningrad compromise, as it was perhaps rightly named by Mr Ciosek, was found, and this compromise is able to meet today the requirements of all the interested parties. I am noting this with a particular satisfaction as I personally attended this Summit. Together with the President of the Republic of Lithuania Mr Adamkus, we yesterday analysed all the aspects of implementing the Joint EU-Russian Statement and came to the conclusion that for the present time this is the most promising document. The more so, that consultations between Lithuania and Russia have started, and it is an extremely vigorous start, as it will be necessary to transform all of the 15 provisions of this Joint Statement into technical regulations in order to implement the idea of this compromise document.

I must say that it is not only the transit issue that poses problems for the Kaliningrad oblast. The participants of this Conference are well aware of the fact that only a decade ago the Kaliningrad oblast was a closed area where no foreigners were allowed to enter, the port was closed for foreign ships, and even the citizens of the Soviet Union were not able to visit such regions as Baltysk without previously obtaining an invitation, then their documents had to be processed by the Department of Internal Affairs of their place of residence, and only afterwards they could start planning their trip to Kaliningrad. Certainly, the situation has changed drastically over the recent years, and we have moved from the closed zone into a completely open regime. Nevertheless, we still experience grave consequences of this half a century long isolation, especially in the area of economics. During the first years following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Kaliningrad oblast found itself like an actual island without the supply of assembly parts for its industry, which brought about its sharp decline, and this slump in industrial output was the greatest in all Russia. In a number of indicators, our loss was over sixty percent of the previous industrial potential. All this demanded for modernisation of economic life, and in 1996 an economic mechanism was worked out in the form of the law on the Special Economic Zone, which enabled to reach during the last years a rate of development in industrial production which by about three times exceeded that in Russia. By the results for the year 2001, this development rate was 12.5 per cent, while in Russia it was approximately 4.5 per cent. This year it is also at the level of 12.5 per cent, and I am convinced that we will finish the year with the same indicator. In 2001 the volume of investment amounted to 8 billion roubles and exceeded the 2000 level by 37 per cent.

The situation is such that we find ourselves in extremely unfavourable economic circumstances, especially from the point of view of infrastructure. The infrastructure of the oblast is to a great extent based on what was slightly modernised from the pre-war infrastructure, though, basically, especially as concerns housing-utilities and transport spheres, all this is actually still based on the pre-war potential. The Soviet-time modernisation, regretfully, did not affect us to the extent it involved our neighbour Lithuania - now an independent state - and we are well aware of how much effort we still need in order to reach the standard of living and wellbeing enjoyed by both our neighbours, Lithuania and Poland. The President of our country fully understands this and takes a personal interest in the issues related with the Kaliningrad oblast.

Last year the Federal Target Programme of Development of the oblast was adopted for the period until 2010. It started functioning this year. It is foreseen to invest over 3 billion US dollars into the implementation of this Programme for the realisation of a considerable number of projects. These are the projects which involve the energy sector, the satisfaction of demand with our own electric

energy supply, the construction of a power plant with the generating capacity of 900 megawatt, with the introduction of the first block with the generating capacity of 450 megawatt in the year 2005. As concerns the transport infrastructure on the whole - on 1st January 2003, the first section of the ferry terminal to connect St Petersburg and Baltyjsk will start operating, as one of the elements of the conversion of the military naval base, where one harbour was transformed to be used for a civil ferry. The ferry line St Petersburg - Kaliningrad was put into operation in 2001, now it is the line St Petersburg-Baltyjsk- ports of Germany, with the ferry named "Georg Ots", which was obtained from an Estonian shipping company and started sailing on 1st January 2003. A deep-water terminal is under construction now, in general it will be a deep-water harbour in the Baltyjsk region, which is also the result of conversion.

Certainly, much effort will also be necessary for the upgrading of what is known as joint undertakings. These are border-customs crossing points. There are quite a number of border crossing points in the oblast, where only three of them meet the requirements of the present day. Of particular importance there is the assistance promised to us by the European Union and recorded in the Joint Statement. Nevertheless, it is very important not to stretch this assistance over a lengthy period of time. Work is in process over a joint project to upgrade the border crossing point at Bagrationovsk on the Polish border, where 18 million US dollars are being invested, with Russia investing 15 million, while 3 million are coming from the European Union. The European share was extended over a period of time almost as long as one year. At such a pace, the process of upgrading will take a very long time, and finally it is not just about setting people to making the crossing in comfort - it is first of all for the sake of the functioning of the region's economy.

This year for the first time we reached the Soviet-time level in the cargo turnover of our ports, and we believe that the next year this rate will be more significant. Every day 49 trains arrive to the Kaliningrad oblast from Russia, thus you can imagine the burden this creates on the still underdeveloped customs infrastructure at the border crossings, especially in the region of Kybartai - Chernyshevskoje.

I would especially like to concentrate on the results of those economic changes that took place during these years. The industry is in essence restored, with the exception of individual enterprises. There have appeared completely new industries which previously did not exist in the economy of the region. These are the assembly of BMW vehicles, Kia Motors, there function the assembly and production of TV sets and work meat processing factories that produce 20 per cent of all tinned meat products for the Russian market. There actively works the fish processing industry, which produces 32 per cent of all tinned fish products for the Russian market. At present there function in the region almost 200 joint ventures, thus it is possible to say that through the joint ventures, the economy of the Kaliningrad oblast is deeply integrated into the economy of Western countries, I will present here only some numbers about the oblast: there function about 500 Russian-Polish joint ventures, 500 Russian-Lithuanian enterprises, and 307 Russian-German ones. Next, there follow Russian-Belorussian enterprises, and the development of Russian-Belorussian relationship is gaining momentum by way of establishing joint enterprises. I would especially like to highlight our long-standing relationship with Lithuania. I have already mentioned the 500 joint ventures, and there also are substantial investments. Thus, for instance, within this year alone, 7 million US dollars were invested in Sovetsk for the enterprise "Viiknai" producing fish fingers. This means the output of 20 000 tonnes a year and the production will be exported to 32 countries.

I am telling you all this, dear colleagues, to show that even a slight interference with the existing communication regime, economic ties and human relationships may produce a setback. Therefore, as a participant of both the Moscow Summit of 28 May and the Brussels Summit, I can say that we, both the Russian and the European diplomats, took a serious attitude towards the preparation of the Brussels Summit including serious consultations with the governments of Poland and Lithuania, and managed to come up with a mechanism that enables us to talk about dynamics, namely positive dynamics, based on the development of economic ties and human relationships, without inflicting damage on any of these elements.

There is one issue, I believe, that cannot be left without separate attention, namely the issue of environment. Regrettably, the Kaliningrad oblast finds itself in the most difficult situation in comparison with Lithuania and Poland, as during the last decade, we have done very little to improve the ecologic situation, especially in respect of the Nemen River. Yesterday we discussed this issue with President Adamkus. Prime Minister Kasjanov, with whom I had a comprehensive conversation, informed that there was a possibility to get a credit from the European Bank of Investment for the

construction of waste water treatment plant in Sovetsk, in Nemansk and in Slavsk with the capacity of 120 000 cubic meter per 24 hours, including waste water treatment facilities for the pulp and paper factories in Sovetsk and Nemansk. This amounts to 55 million euros. I am sure that here are present very influential people who might give us their assistance in promoting this project, the more so that this was promised by the European Bank of Investment. We are fully aware of the degree of our responsibility in ensuring that the Baltic Sea basin, as well as the basin of the air ocean above the Kaliningrad oblast, which means above our mutual European home, remain clean. It is us our task, and we will fulfil it, but it would be desirable to deal with it while the consequences of those dangerous emissions, which for many decades have been flowing and poisoning not only the rivers but likewise the Baltic Sea itself, have not become too grave.

I would like to mention with gratitude the efforts of business people, those business people from 52 states who are bringing their capital into the Kaliningrad oblast. We maintain contacts with the governments of 138 states of the world, and the trade turnover of our oblast for the period of 9 months amounts to 1,800m US dollars. I am convinced that this constitutes dynamics in comparison with the previous year. Now we know that it is a 40 per cent increase, and I believe that, despite all those difficulties we are experiencing, we will gradually be implementing the objectives we were given by the President of our country: to reach the standard of living enjoyed by our neighbours.

Thank you for your attention.

Implementation of the Concept of a Wider Europe. Lithuanian Perspective

Evaldas Ignatavičius

I believe we all agree that with the process of the EU enlargement, the Wider Europe initiative gives the EU an opportunity to define the Union's policy towards the new neighbours for the nearest 10-15 years. Thinking in this perspective, we have to have a certain dose of long-term optimism.

As we launch today's discussion on the concept of Wider Europe, we should seek answers to the following questions:

- Who are the Union's new neighbours?
- What benefits would the Wider Europe offer the EU and its new neighbours?
- What principles should apply and what instruments should be used in its implementation?

As time is precious, let us go straight to these issues.

First, who are the new neighbours?

While the main focus of the initiative is on Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, we believe it is important to have Russia involved as an important partner in the region. The Wider Europe initiative will complement the existing EU-Russia dialogue in the PCA framework and the Northern Dimension initiative; the more so that many of the issues regarding justice and home affairs, economic cooperation, energy dialogue, and the environment are common for the region and should be addressed on a common basis if the EU wants to have a lead in these discussions.

An extension of the initiative over the coming years to embrace Southern Caucasus, i.e. Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, could be considered as the EU relations with Wider Europe progress, especially with Turkey's closer integration with the EU.

Second, what would Wider Europe initiative give to the EU and to its new neighbours?

We believe that the initiative should target the following objectives:

- support for democratic and economic reforms in new neighbours, thereby ensuring, in the long run, their European choice and a European perspective; that is, giving a "meaning of the EU" to the new neighbours as an impetus for political, economic and structural reforms;
- ensuring stability and security of the EU borders, with the objective to find an answer to the major concerns in the area of justice and home affairs such as border controls, illegal migration and human trafficking, trans-border organized crime, smuggling and corruption, as well as good governance and mutual legal assistance;
- facilitating trade and promoting investment, expanding export markets for EU goods and ensuring a stable trade regime; promoting structural, administrative, and judicial reforms and approximation of national legislations with that of the EU;
- seeking new sources of energy through diversification of supply and energy transportation routes;
- narrowing the gap between the living standards across the borders, avoiding political and social tensions;
- easing environmental concerns and pursuing environmental cooperation.

Third, the principles and the route map

Let me outline some of the key principles that should apply in the implementation of the Wider Europe concept. First of all, *the principle of differentiation*, based on the level of the

countries' relations with the EU and the political will to adopt European political and economic values.

We agree that there can be no one-size-fits-all approach. At the same time, it is important to keep the gates of opportunity open for those countries. It will give them a choice, based on the principles of *self-selection and conditional*, to decide how far and how fast they are able to go. It will also give an opportunity for the EU to push harder in demanding the implementation of agreed benchmarks.

In our understanding, the "negative" (or problematic) agenda, such as justice and home affairs issues or fight against corruption, should be put forward together with the "positive" agenda, which will give answers to some of the new neighbours' political and economic expectations vis-a-vis the relations with the EU.

"Labelling" important. The countries addressed by this initiative should have a sense of perspective. That is, it should be discussed what level of the relations the EU expects to have with the new neighbours over the coming years. PGA? Neighbourhood agreement? Free trade agreement? Any of these targets should be strictly conditional on the process of political, economic, administrative and judiciary reforms and legal approximation.

Current EU candidates should be involved in the preparation of the initiative from the outset, since we, the candidates, have practical reform experience; can speak their languages; and have good links with the new neighbours' political, administrative, economic, and business establishment.

Importantly, Wider Europe should not become just another theoretical exercise. The experience of the Common Strategies indicates that there is a need for a well defined "route map" outlining priority tasks, final objectives, and step-by-step benchmarking.

It is essential to support the "route map" with an adequate mechanism of dialogue, including implementation review and monitoring. While relying on the existing PCA framework, one should bear in mind that at some stage of implementation of the initiative the question may arise - is the PCA framework enough for this task?

Adequate financial means and human resources are necessary. Increase of TACIS and other EU funds for the new neighbours should be seen as a first step, with the perspective to discuss a separate budget line in the 2007-2013 financial framework, including, specifically, the Kaliningrad region. The possibility of launching a new mechanism for technical and financial assistance for the new neighbours could also be considered, a sort of transferring the PHARE experience further to the East. Coordination of bilateral and regional assistance programmes should contribute to those efforts.

Finally, benchmarking and instruments

Existing PCA mechanism of the *political dialogue* should be used more effectively. There is a need to show more interest in the political developments of the new neighbour countries, to expand relations with their political parties, as well as the opposition, NGOs, mass media, and the academe.

Economic relations comprise an area where the new neighbours are most likely to profit from greater incentives. At the same time, it will depend on the will of those countries to support a pro-European agenda and economic reforms.

A benchmark approach will determine the step-by-step tasks. Implementation of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements will test in reality how the new neighbours apply the most favourable nation regime. Implementation of IMF programmes, efficient fiscal policy reform, acceleration of the privatisation process and creation of adequate investment climate, implementation of non-discriminatory measures, trade liberalisation, liberalisation of the agricultural policy and opening up of the service sector should be reinforced by accession to the WTO and adaptation of national legislations in line with the WTO standards.

A possibility of the free trade agreements is already foreseen in the PCAs. The economic part of the initiative should be maximalistic enough to target this objective. It is worthwhile looking into the EU experience of trade liberalisation in the Balkans, to include some possible

areas for asymmetric trade liberalization, provided the new neighbours meet the discipline of free trade.

At the same time, it is important to assess bilateral and regional arrangements existing between the new neighbours, such as the Russia-Belarus customs union.

Administrative capacity. Having in mind the experience and expertise of the EU candidate countries, we suggest considering the possibility of "twinning" projects between the central authorities of the candidate countries and the new neighbours. Lithuania is already pursuing projects with Kaliningrad and Belarus (i.e., training local authorities).

Justice and Home Affairs. Favourable travel arrangements or even opening of discussion on the possibility of a visa free regime as a long term objective should be based on the readiness of the new neighbours to provide proof of successes in combating illegal migration and organised crime; to sign readmission treaties; to strengthen border control and management, including modernisation of border crossings; to sign and ratify border agreements; and cooperation on consular issues.

The Concept of a Wider Europe: Problems and Prospects

Vytautas Radžvilas

*Remarks at a Conference „Euiliding Wider Europe“
Vilnius, 30th November 2002*

There can hardly be any doubt with reference to the notion of "Wider Europe" that this is exactly the concept which urges us to once again turn to the prospects of the West-East relationship. These prospects can only be presented through the; analysis of the present state (status quo) of this relationship. We maintain that it could be defined by the following:

1. In general, in the international politics there have practically disappeared the distinctive value signposts of the dividing line between the West (EU) and the countries of East Europe (Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus is an exception) and the distinct criteria of the effectiveness of current policy. International policy on a broader scale has become unpredictable, or, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, we are living in a "global turmoil".
2. One of the possible tools for analysing the relationship concerned may be the term of "circular interaction". The essence of this interaction is the creation of an increasingly strong field of interdependence where both interaction partners lack clearly defined long-term political goals. It looks like the latter is based on the strategy of deterrence which consists from two interrelated components; intimidation and enticement. For example, all through the process of resolving the issue of Russian transit through the territory of Lithuania, the EU was constantly subjected to threats that a resolution of the issue in a way found unacceptable by Russia would in essence undermine the relations between both sides? At the same time it was lured with promises that a favourable resolution of that problem was offering almost boundless prospects for the further improvement of these relations. No valid arguments were presented, though, as its is known an eclectic and ambiguous decision was taken, which results in a whole range of complicated technical and political problems for the EU, Russia and Lithuania.

On the other hand, there is the decision of Brussels to deny the Belarus dictator the entrance visa. This decision seems to have also been based on the desire to intimidate the official Minsk, without taking any regard of the unpredictability of consequences.

3. It seems that the essence of the strategy of deterrence is the need to conceal the actually existing differences in the value orientation and interests of both sides, and to maintain at any costs the semblance of positive development in these relations. As it is evidenced by only the seemingly constructive resolution of the transit issue, such a strategy fails to eliminate the fundamental ambiguity of the relationship on both sides and gives rise to a number of unexpected consequences which will surface in this case as well when it becomes necessary to present a resolution of this problem which will have to be clear, definite and not likely to threaten the Schengen area.
4. An outcome in such a situation could be seen in three possible principal development models in the relationship between the EU and East Europe:
 - a) continuance of the "circular interaction";
 - b) "neighbourhood", i.e. a model based on the clearly recognised and openly stated differences in the value attitudes and long-term pragmatic interests of both sides. At the same time, attempts are being made to implement several political conditions: effectual protection and defence of human rights, creation of favourable conditions for the development of civil society; elimination of the existing potential sources for conflict, e.g. by legally establishing the borders of Russia and CIS.
 - c) "integration" ("thinking about the unthinkable"), i.e. the mode! envisioning the prospects of the EU and East Europe integration, however distant it may be, though a question naturally emerges here whether such a prospect could be

envisioned at all. We believe that it ought to be contemplated at least because today East Europe still finds itself in the turmoil of geopolitical self-determination, therefore to discard in advance an integration prospect would immediately narrow the field of discussion on this issue.

The implementation of the second or the third model is conditioned by a necessary prerequisite: to restore in a modern way, i.e. not within the context of the Iron Curtain, the dividing lines between the EU and the countries of the East European region. The essence of such restoration is inherent in the need to clearly state the existing value orientation and interest differences between both regions. Nevertheless, it is evident already now that the prospects for the implementation of these models depend upon the EU political will and the character of changes underway in East Europe.

5. The current relationship between the EU and East Europe is based on the assumption that the democratisation processes in that region are irreversible. This might be proved by the abundance of transformations in the countries concerned (except Belarus). However, attempts to view these changes as irreversible seem to be too hasty. It becomes especially evident upon analysing the tendencies of civil society development in those countries.
6. There is an increasing number of indications that make it possible to conclude that the post-communist transformation processes in East Europe are not resulting in the formation of open civil societies based on democratic principles. It is more likely that in the course of these processes, the buds of an authentic civil society are suppressed by way of marginalising them. I.e. clientelistic instrumental democracies are emerging and simulative societies controlled by the authorities are being formed, which enable to create and sustain the semblance of democratisation of those countries. The intensity level of this civil society suppression process is not equal in all countries.
7. Thus, in particular:
 - a) Russia. At the present time there are no social-political forces in the country which could be able to exert any real influence on the decisions of the President concerning the country's internal and foreign policy. Such situation is a fertile ground for the expression of voluntarism and prevents from finding an answer to the question — who are you, Mr. Putin?
 - b) Ukraine. Despite the complicated internal political situation, the prospects for the civil society formation in Ukraine look far better. A favourable factor is the controversial geopolitical orientation of the country's society, which also means that the major part of the society maintains pro-Western attitudes. The existence of this tendency and its deliberate furtherance implies that Ukraine might turn towards the integration with the West.
 - c) Moldova. It is probably the most backward country in Europe today, governed by pro-Moscow political forces. On the other hand, an extensive and effective response of the society towards the further Russification of the country shows that Moldova's prospects on the way towards European integration could not be evaluated exclusively upon the results of the elections. It could be reasonably assumed that the integration potential of the country is far greater than it is commonly believed. However, its realisation is precluded by a number of political reasons and, first of all, the unresolved question of the Transnistria (Transdnestr - Padnestrje) region.
 - d) Belarus. The most substantial factors that hinder the development of the relationship between the international security community and Belarus are the following: the existent dictatorial authoritarian regime and still uncertain statehood prospects of this country. A potential Belarus-Russian Union should not be regarded as analogous to the European Union projects, as the former Union will not be based on a freely expressed political will, but rather on voluntaristic agreements between the governing elites. The unpredictable response of the

Belarussians towards the formation of such a union might turn into a serious political problem for the EU.

8. This theoretical and empirical analysis indicates that a further development of the relationship between the EU and East Europe is still not predictable, as so far there is no express political will on the part of the EU, nor any reliable answer concerning the direction of the transformation processes in East Europe. Within this context, the summarised models of the relationship development could take the following shapes:
 - a) the currently existing "circular model" and its further implementation might imply that the relations between the EU and East European region would be developed without a clear political purpose, based exclusively on instantaneous pragmatic benefit. These relations would also be founded mainly on the personal links between the heads of the states and made completely dependent upon random changes in the political situation.
 - b) The implementation of the "neighbourhood" model would necessitate the elaboration of a detailed "road map". The preparation of such a plan of action ought to be based on the awareness that there exist two different political-legal areas in Europe, which upon certain conditions could be approximated. Paradoxically, that would enable to return to the "pragmatic" policy, based on the clearly defined national long-term interests. It would pave the way for a new *status quo* in the EU-East Europe relationship, though that would preclude the possibility of considering the third, perhaps, the most positive scenario.
 - c) The implementation of an integration model is, first of all, a decisive political step on the part of the EU that fundamentally changes the prospects of the EU-East Europe relationship and emphasises the regulatory principle, primarily in the relations between the EU and the Russian Federation. Russia could be offered a strategic partnership based on the provision of integration, while the other three countries could be presented with an integration prospect built on the current logic of the EU enlargement.
9. It ought to be repeatedly emphasised that there are emerging three possible models in the development of the relationship between the EU and East Europe. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the indispensable condition for a successful development of relations between the EU and the countries of East Europe is the strengthening of civil society in those countries. Encouragement of this tendency ought to become one of the political priorities of the EU.

At the same time, it is necessary to stress that new type societies are forming in the East European countries, where the establishment of civil society is highly doubtful and problematic, in other words, to offer integration prospects for those countries would be a risky step, without which, however, it is difficult to imagine the contribution of the international security community in strengthening the civil society in the region concerned and in enhancing its role in the choice of those countries of their geopolitical orientation.

Challenges of Cooperation in Europe

Borys Tarasyuk

Remarks at a Conference „Building Wider Europe“

Vilnius, 30th November 2002

In my presentation, I would like to concentrate on several points: one of them the conceptual one in the context of discussion on a wider Europe, and how we in Ukraine see this discussion, what is the place we see for Ukraine in this process, what are the challenges for us, and what are the ways for coping with those challenges. Wider Europe, European Convention, new Constitution of Europe, different debates on the future of Europe, including this one, all are a manifestation of ever growing process of European Integration. We certainly can not but welcome this process and this discussion. The only problem and concern we have is that in this debate and in this concept of the Wider Europe we don't see an adequate place for Ukraine. The idea of so to say "neighbour status" is something unclear and vague, and this idea is being proposed to Ukraine, raking into account that since 1999 the European Union itself has the Ukraine as a unique and strategic partner, so taking into account that Ukraine is being mentioned in the company with outsiders of the European Integration processes, so this is not a very pleasant perspective for Ukraine. At the same time, the war devastated countries of the Balkans have been presented the perspective of association. So what are then the criteria for including some countries into the candidates and excluding the others. So in this form, the idea of neighbourhood status is not very attractive in Ukraine, provided that this idea is lacking the objective, clear objective, and provided that this idea is lacking the verification and a distinctive approach in connection with each partner. Let me remind you, the distinguished ladies and gentlemen, that Europe is not just fifteen, Europe is not even just fifteen plus ten, Europe is much bigger, and the EU is not equal to Europe. And in this regard, may I ask you a question: does this mean, all these debates about Wider Europe, excluding Ukraine, that Ukraine is being written off? Who can answer this question? And in this connection I can not agree with the conclusions where it concerns Ukraine from the report of the Munich Center for the Applied Policy Research. I would like to say that during recent times we have heard some very sharp remarks and statements made by high officials of the European Commission, including the recent statement by President of the European Commission Mr. Prodi, who seems to have forgotten about geography, and I would like to remind that Ukraine is not in the Pacific Ocean, Ukraine is not in Africa, Ukraine is in the centre of Central Europe. This statement, if it is addressed at a discredited leader, is not serving the purpose, specify whom you are addressing, and they can not but be received it in Ukraine as an insult to the people, to the society. I would rather welcome the comments made by Prime Minister Carl Bildt and Doctor Lopata that the integration is the way for the future of Europe, and the integration must continue within and between the society, and I am quoting, Prime Minister Carl Bildt, "Recently at the meeting between the Ukrainian parliamentarians and Euro-parliamentarians, we have concluded that Ukraine should have an association perspective". I think that this is the way for defining the specific place for Ukraine in the European Integration processes. So, to conclude with this issue, I would like to say that the concepts of the past that are deterrence, containment, isolation and even neighbourhood should be replaced with the involvement, partnership, integration and united Europe as the end of the process. What is Ukraine today? Ukraine is not only a discredited leader, Ukraine is not only the Chernobyl aftermath. Today Ukraine is demonstrating the economic recovery despite of the internal crisis. In the year 2000 we had six percent GDP growth, last year nine percent GDP growth and this year we expect between four and five percent. Ukraine is a European nation with European aspirations. Number one in terms of territory among the European nations and number five in population. The industrial and agricultural potential is rather big, just mentioning missiles, and outer space technologies, aircraft, ship building and agriculture. Ukraine is an ever growing market with growing purchasing capacity of the population. Ukraine was and is a contributor, not only a consumer of the European security and stability. We are the transit country of energy supply from Russia and the Caspian to the EU member states.

About the attitude of Ukrainians towards the European Union I dare say that today's parliament is one of the most pro-European and pro-euroatlantic parliaments in the history of Ukraine. Just two facts to prove this: on the 21 of November, the first day of NATO summit, the Ukrainian parliament approved a historic, I would say, resolution supporting membership of Ukraine in NATO, a week later, that is last Thursday, the Ukrainian parliament approved a comprehensive resolution on the relationship with the European Union, and believe me, this is not just about the wish of Ukraine to join

European Union, this is about a very concrete recommendation to the Parliament, to the Government and to the President, very concrete.

What I would like to ask you and urge you - look at Ukraine strategically, try to look at Ukraine not through the angle of a discredited leader, try to look at the Ukraine beyond the horizon, that is beyond the year two thousand and four, when we are going to have next presidential elections.

Remember about the scepticism over Baltic countries to join the European Union. Among the challenges we face in connection with the European Union enlargement, unlike with NATO enlargement, we do have several challenges among them — internal and external. Among the external challenges we may expect the reduction of people to people contacts between the neighbouring countries who would be members of the European Union. Few examples - Slovakia: from seven hundred and fifty thousand Ukrainians visiting this country in 1999, we have now two hundred and fifty Ukrainians visiting this country after the introduction of visa. Last year 4.8 million Ukrainians visited Poland, and we expect that as a result of the visa introduction, this number maybe twice as low. The same with Hungary, with which we also have rather extensive exchanges.

We expect the damage to our traditional bilateral economic ties with our neighbouring countries - the Baltic States, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia. And we expect the reduction in tourist use and labour force exchanges.

What could be done, or what do we have the right to expect from the European Union? First, clear concept on the objective of our cooperation, that means the perspective of association. In a neighbourhood agreement or in the European agreement - it doesn't matter. Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country but a partner country, so the differentiation approach should be applied. Emphasis should be made on encouraging close relationship between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia and Baltic States, Hungary. And I think that the European Union and our friends in neighbouring countries may consider the possibility of establishing closer interparliamentary ties, non-governmental ties in addition to the governmental. Next, ease to a maximum extent possible the burden on ordinary people and business community in visa policy and practice. Next, we expect the conclusion of readmission agreement between Ukraine and European Union, and we expect that the European Union would help us to persuade our Russian neighbours to conclude the same agreement. We think that it would be in the interest of the European Union a participation of the Ukrainian military units in the EU rapid direction force. Against transportation concorcium - it seems to me that it would be in the interest of the European Union, some EU member states that their leading companies join this gas transportation concorcium together with Ukraine and Russia. Involve Ukrainian regions and Euro regions in local authorities into the Europe wide regional and transborder cooperation, and I can only comment the statement made by doctor Dammeyer at the conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, Ukraine must do its own homework and the EU must help in indicating the perspective. Thank you very much.

International Conference "Building Wider Europe"

The opening speech by **H. E. Mr. Antanas Valionis**,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania
Vilnius, Presidential Palace, 30th November 2002

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first extend my sincere gratitude to Professor "Weidenfeld, a co-organizer of this event. I am pleased that the teams of Lithuania's Foreign Ministry and the Bertelsmann Foundation have co-operated fruitfully and enabled us to meet here today.

Dear colleagues,

We have gathered here in Vilnius, a city of tolerance and open-mindedness, at a particular moment. A new, wider Europe is about to come to life. A week ago in Prague we saw emerging the contours of " a Europe whole, free and at peace". Visiting Vilnius just a week ago, American President Bush repeated the same notion.

NATO's historic decision in Prague recognized Lithuania's readiness to make its political and practical contribution to strengthening security in the Euro-Atlantic area. In this context, I am proud that the Vilnius process, launched by the NATO candidates in 2000 in this city, proved to be a success. The Vilnius Group has contributed to promoting solidarity, openness and co-operation among NATO candidates. Even before that, Lithuania's experience of promoting good neighborhood in the region was recognized in the Vilnius Conference of 1997, which brought together ten Presidents and Russia's Prime Minister.

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers session in Vilnius this May, which adopted a declaration on regional co-operation, once again proved Lithuania's attempts in promoting regional cooperation.

Now we are looking forward to clear messages from the Copenhagen EU Summit, which -I am sure - will be the greatest step in the unification history of our continent.

What is next? What would happen after this double enlargement of NATO and the EU? Have we already extended the spirit of openness to the East? On the contrary, we still need to support democratic and economic reforms in the countries east from us, thereby ensuring, in the long run, their European choice. At the same time, we need to facilitate trade and promote investment, to ensure stable trade regimes and thus to reduce the gap between the living standards. The challenges of today - trans-national organized crime, nuclear power risks, illegal migration and human trafficking - cannot be tackled by a single state.

However, what does that bring to my country? After the ratification of the EU and NATO entry treaties, Lithuania will become the eastern border of the enlarged Union and the Alliance. We take it seriously, but we more willingly think of "friendly borders" rather than of "frozen front-lines". These borders should protect us from illegal trafficking, criminality. But they should also remain open to good relations, mutual understanding, and cooperation.

Over the past years, the Baltic Sea region has been an example of successful cooperation between East and West, between the EU, NATO and a new Russia. Lithuania's strategic partnership with Poland ensured a successful juncture between the Baltic region and Central Europe.

With the knowledge of language and - what is even more important - the mentality of the West and the East, such countries as Lithuania can be of real value, as those two parts of Europe come closer. Small democracies like my nation can play a highly visible role, especially in alliance with other democracies.

Let me present specific examples.

For several years now, Lithuanian institutions have been implementing projects aimed at the promotion of democracy and free-market in the Kaliningrad Region, Ukraine and Belarus. We plan to expand these activities, giving priority to sharing our knowledge and expertise with partners in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Administrative capacities, environment, regional and cross-border co-operation, contacts between NGOs and people-to-people contacts were the areas where we have achieved significant success. Together with our Russian colleagues, we have managed to establish joint institutions. The Lithuanian experience in co-operation with the Kaliningrad region, combined with the Polish one, provided a significant input for the elaboration of the EU strategy towards this region, especially on the "Northern Dimension".

Currently we have to finalize the transit regime. We work closely together with our neighbors and the EU on these issues, seeking optimal solutions in accordance with the Schengen *acquis*. This will be a testing ground for good relations in the region. Although not identically, but well-functioning Finnish-Russian Schengen border proved not to slow-down bilateral contacts and trade flow. I am sure that soon we shall resolve the transit issue. But a lot remains to be done: the process of ratification of the already concluded border agreement has been long overdue. We still need to agree on readmission treaties with Russia and Belarus. We also need to agree on EU regulations on Facilitated Transit Documents and on the finance and guarantees.

Resolution of the transit question will permit us to liberate our energies for concentrating on economic co-operation, the dialogue between civil societies, and cultural ties. Let me be crystal-clear: with the enlargement of the EU, we shall continue to regard Kaliningrad region as a window of opportunity for the whole of Russia.

Sometimes we feel from our colleagues in Moscow an unreasonable fear of "loosing" this region. There is a fear that if the region becomes more prosperous and more open, it could start drifting apart. But there is no viable alternative to economic development, investment, and openness. Opportunities are here and should not be missed.

It is hard to imagine an emerging wider Europe without Russia. Now, as the Baltic States are completing their entry into the EU and NATO, I hope that our bilateral ties with Russia will gain a new, more favorable momentum. Our economic ties are expanding, cultural and academic cooperation is improving. Big Russian companies are getting more actively involved in the Lithuanian energy sector. In general, the Baltic Sea region will become the focus of EU's relationship with Russia.

With our neighbor Belarus we share the longest border and a long period of common history. We expect that Belarus will play by the rules of a democratic, civil society. We are ready, if requested, to provide further advice in this regard. Lithuania consistently speaks up for pragmatic ties with Belarus, for engagement of this country into the processes of regional co-operation. I am convinced that a democratic Belarus and its future integration into the family of European democracies should be a priority of all of us. Yet it is up to Belarus itself to make the choices. It is through Belarus that major routes of cargo and energy resources extend. All this creates an especially favorable potential for economic cooperation and implementation of joint projects.

We are determined to foster closer links with Ukraine. Even if there are many questions to answer today, this country has a European vocation. It is too important to be left aside. With this in mind, Lithuania initiated closer contacts on different levels with Ukraine by setting up joint institutions, which could be useful for Ukraine's inclusion into regional and Euro-Atlantic integration. A close and interactive dialogue with Ukraine should also facilitate Ukraine's transition to an open and democratic system.

This summer, in Riga, Polish President Kwasniewski proposed to encourage cooperation between the Vilnius Group and the Visegrad countries. This proposal, which does not mean an artificial grouping, could provide a space for self-expression and initiative for Central Europeans to advance security, democracy and prosperity. It could help us to learn from the experience of NATO's most recent members - Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

Distinguished guests.

I shall conclude my remarks by telling you that we are honored by the fact that this gathering brought together high representatives from a variety of countries of a widening Europe. This, I am convinced, will ensure a high quality of speeches and debates.

I wish you all stimulating deliberations and a pleasant stay in Vilnius.

Thank you.