

Address of the President of the Republic of Macedonia

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests and dear friends,

The topic that you have chosen as a focus for this conference – democratisation and the security challenges in SEE (South East Europe) – embraces the two most significant issues which are in tight correlation with the future of this region. The crucial question is: will SEE manage to join the modern European and world democratic and security processes and institutions, or it will stay on the margins of the modern developments, still preoccupied with the old inherited problems, which have already caused so many human traumas and backwardness?

Despite the choice being more than clear, nevertheless, one should explicitly stress the readiness of the countries in the region to adjust to the new realities and demands of the new era. We should all ask ourselves if we are indeed prepared to overcome our mutual misunderstandings, the old mental patterns and habits, and of course, the old methods of ‘conflict resolution’.

We welcome the twenty-first century with lot of hopes and expectations for the prosperity of mankind but we also should not neglect the numerous challenges we still face day by day and that still cause a lot of problems for our move forward. Some of these challenges are deep-rooted in our troublesome history: poverty, conflicts, dictatorship and various diseases have always been among the most often and most serious problems for the peoples in the region. At the same time, there are many other challenges that are more recent, such as globalisation, environment protection, etc. that also call for more attention.

Undoubtedly, all our efforts should be directed towards creation of a concept that will provide equal access to the benefits of globalisation process to all nations and individuals. The appropriate access and distribution of one’s own resources, the usage of the knowledge and modern technology is supposed to facilitate smoother and easier facing with the demands of modernity to all nations. At the same time, like never before in history, we bear mutual responsibility in regard to environment protection. We have to do that right now and right here. History will make records of our deeds and they will be either condemned or praised by the future generations. Let’s face our responsibility and do our best on behalf of our future generations.

Globalisation rapidly brings closer the countries and nations of the world, and thus in the new millennium we expect the United Nations to bear responsibility for promotion of more efficient world integration and strengthening of the interdependence of its member countries’ behaviour. In order to make the UN being efficient and carry on its continuous path towards the future in the twenty-first century, all member countries should respect the valid norms of international law and ethics. They are also expected to respond to new challenges, including the forthcoming reform of the world organisation.

The Republic of Macedonia is rightly proud of its role and contribution to the successful realisation and promotion of the main mission of the UN.

The history of our region, that is today called Southeast Europe, has been marked with so many peculiarities, which cannot be found in some other regions of the world. The main problems in this regard should be identified in the way we comprehend the history and the historical processes, the lack of communication and shortage of effective methods of conflict

resolution, which is of utmost importance in the current era of wide integration processes that dominate in Europe and the world as a whole. Therefore, today more than ever, the countries of this region need courage to support a different perspective on the historical legacies, complexes and prejudices. In this context, civilisational human values should be posed as the main and the only valid criteria for dealing with the old and new problems. The best example of how to achieve that is already available – it is the paradigm of united and democratic Europe, and first of all, the commitment to make Europe our common home, in which the Balkans undeniably belong.

The current priority of our politics should be the transformation of SEE into a stable, secure and prosperous part of Europe, which can be achieved only through entire and permanent integration of the countries from the region in the European processes. That should be our common goal and commitment.

The Republic of Macedonia is firmly devoted to take active part in the processes aimed towards stabilisation and democratisation of the region, and is also ready to give contribution to their successful realisation as much as it is within its own possibilities.

The Republic of Macedonia is committed to go on with its policy of protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms. We have already proved our sincere devotion to this noble cause during the Kosovo refugee crisis when we provided shelter for more than 390,000 refugees. Only truly democratic states know and can make the members of the national minorities feel the state as their own, embrace them all as equal citizens through their full integration in society and state structures. Macedonia has constantly been engaged in the fight against organised crime, which is an evil that gets momentum in many states in the world. Our state is committed to realise the economic reforms that will promote market economy, but also takes great measures for promotion of the living standards of its citizens as well as the improvement of the quality of life. Our main approach is based on security and the free flow of goods and capital, of technology and knowledge.

In regard to our international position, the main contribution of Macedonia has been its permanent support of the endeavours of conflict prevention since 1993, when for the first time UN preventive forces were deployed on our territory, as well as later on through our active co-operation with the international community during the Kosovo crisis. Throughout the past decade Macedonia has been implementing the UN resolutions even at times when they had negative effect on our own economy and stability.

Let me now say a few words on the Summit that was held in Skopje few days ago, which brought together the political leaders from all SEE countries. The Skopje Meeting has shown the readiness of the region to start talking with the language of cooperation finally. It has expressed our common wish for stabilisation, democratisation and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. In the best possible manner, the countries and the peoples of this region, which have so far been recognisable as a source of instability, decided to take the fate in their own hands and to start dealing with their problems themselves.

The Stability Pact and the Process of Co-operation in Southeast Europe offer a wide framework for practical realisation of our commitments and policies. I deeply hope that we are not going to miss this big opportunity. Otherwise we will bear huge responsibility for any failure before future generations of our children.

The Skopje Summit had special significance, and even offered one more reason for optimism. Namely, after a decade-long absence and excommunication from the international and regional

scene, the FR of Yugoslavia has got back again among the countries of the region, among its neighbours. We are deeply convinced that it has come back with a sincere wish to become one of the generators and promoters of peace, stability and democratic transformations of the region as a whole. The inclusion within the Stability Pact involves a lot of responsibilities for this country, too. At the same time, with the admission of Yugoslavia, the Stability Pact gets a new impulse that will enable faster implementation of the new principles and positive tendencies. Because of all of this, we dare say that the general situation in the region has been visibly improved.

Democratic changes in the FR of Yugoslavia were greeted by all participants of the Skopje Summit with sincere hope that they would contribute to general stabilisation of the region.

The Republic of Macedonia is going to strengthen its efforts for democracy building. We will not allow any autocratic leaders to threaten democratic changes by heating up nationalist passions and by making obstacles for the political and economic reforms we have already opened. The concept based on citizen democracy is one of our main priorities and a precondition for our prosperity.

At this occasion we would like to recall the statement of the first UN Secretary General, Dag Hamarskjold, according to which "There is no life that can bring more satisfaction than the one devoted to the benefits of one's own country and mankind. That calls for sacrifice of one's personal interests but also courage to defend these principles".

The issue of democratisation and the security challenges in SEE are a complex topic that includes a lot of questions related to our present state of affairs, to our past and our future. I am deeply convinced that your suggestions and opinions will be a significant contribution towards more successful continuation and realisation of the current positive developments in Southeast Europe.

I wish you fruitful discussions and successful completion of this significant scholar event, organised with joint efforts of the Macedonian partner (Institute of Defence) and the PfP Consortium of Military Academies and Security Studies Institutes.

Boris Trajkovski
President of the Republic of Macedonia