

**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA JANEZ
JANŠA AT THE RECEPTION IN HONOUR OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
18 January 2006**

Honourable Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps,
Honourable Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to be able to address you on the occasion of the traditional reception for the diplomatic corps in the Republic of Slovenia. The year we have left behind us was very dynamic and exciting. In its foreign policy, Slovenia accepted the challenge of greater international responsibility arising from its membership in Euro-Atlantic organisations. As for Slovenia's last year internal policy, its outstanding feature was the debate on the need to accelerate development and activate the reform potential of our country.

Slovenia's economy is stable and still growing faster than the European average. Having achieved the lowest rate of inflation so far, it has fulfilled all of the Maastricht Criteria, so that at the close of this year Slovenia will be entirely ready to adopt the euro. At the same time, Slovenia, like the European Union in general, has been pondering the challenges and opportunities of global competition, and this process has gradually matured into a clearer tendency towards reform.

Slovenia's Development Strategy for the period 2006–2013, adopted in June 2005, sets guidelines for the sustainable development and received wide public support. These guidelines are harmoniously integrated in the National Lisbon Action Programme, forwarded to Brussels last October. The debate on modalities of urgent economic and social reforms in Slovenia will be intense and demanding, but the Government has a clear vision of the country's economic development. This vision includes a less regulated, simple and transparent business environment that allows national and foreign companies to profit from their competitive advantages, especially in knowledge and innovation. An important premise of this vision is the economy's openness for domestic companies with ambitions for presence abroad and foreign companies interested in Slovenia's market, as well as their participation in the second round of privatisation.

Slovenia welcomed the Next Financial Perspective and considers this move a sign of the political and economic revival of the EU. It has been made evident once again that the enlarged Union is capable of adopting strategic decisions. Nevertheless, we are quite aware that the Financial Perspective is not yet a fully adequate response to the EU development challenges. We believe that the agreement to revise the EU budget is a step in the right direction.

In the EU, special attention should be paid to other key issues such as unfavourable demographic trends, increasing pressures of global competition, as well as lagging behind in technological development and labour productivity growth compared with other parts of the world. The most recent events also make it obvious that the EU must be more active in its concern for sustainable energy supply. Similar to other EU Member States, Slovenia is very much in favour of the EU preparing its own well coordinated energy strategy as soon as possible, as well as revising the use of nuclear energy.

Dear Guests,

The Republic of Slovenia has a solid position within the international community. This fact is not only due to Slovenia's EU and NATO membership but is also the result of our active and successful involvement for the benefit of the international community. Last year, Slovenia participated in numerous humanitarian, military-stabilising as well as economic and cultural projects within the international community. We responded, to the best of our abilities, to the needs of countries and people struck by natural disasters. We increased Slovenian participation in international operations with humanitarian purposes that contribute to the stabilisation of the situation in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan.

The greatest challenge for young state of Slovenia was last year's chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We assumed this office during a demanding period, yet we managed to initiate or accelerate the process of constructive rapprochement between various viewpoints on many issues. Already during the year of OSCE chairmanship we have started with preparations for our forthcoming EU presidency in the first half of 2008. We highly appreciate the valuable insights that more experienced EU Member States have shared with us so far.

Slovenia has been actively participating in the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, especially in the area of planned enlargement. Last year, the National Assembly ratified the Treaty of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania. We are particularly pleased with the progress made by the countries of the Western Balkans on their European path. Furthermore, the start of accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey has become evermore important in the atmosphere created by the deadlock in relation to the Constitutional Treaty.

Last year, common efforts of the international community to defuse crisis situations in the world were most successful in the Indonesian region of Aceh. Hopes were also raised due to certain developments in the Middle East. Here I have in mind the progress in the political process in Iraq. At the same time we hope that the positive trends, which emerged after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, will continue.

The first summit in the history of the UN has not resulted in the comprehensive reform of this organisation; however, the provisions in the final document contain well-conceived elements for the preparation of more effective solutions. Within the framework of the World Trade Organisation, the needed steps forward have been made in the process of world trade liberalisation. Mutual fear of competitive pressures still remains strong, but we are on the right path towards more equitable trading conditions.

During the last year, besides the enhanced challenge to fight terrorism, two new priority issues emerged on the long list of global issues, namely an intercultural dialogue and the management of global migration flows. In addition, natural disasters have again exposed the extreme vulnerability of mankind. I sincerely hope that the international community will soon recognise the necessity of systematic preparation for such threats, because the spontaneous solidarity of people and countries is not a sufficient basis for responsive and successful assistance to those in distress. At the same time such unfortunate events should give additional impetus to a more responsible attitude towards nature and to a more determined promotion of sustainable development.

Excellencies,

The year 2006 will be full of challenges. Slovenia will continue with the implementation of its planned foreign policy priorities. We will keep paying a lot of attention to good neighbourly relations. We are interested in the further expansion of regional, political and economic cooperation in Central Europe. As a member of the EU and NATO, we will continue our persistent support of the open door policy for all countries of the Western Balkans. A Euro-Atlantic perspective is crucial for these countries in their further development and maintenance of stability in the wider region. This perspective should be the guiding principle of the international community in solving constitutional dilemmas such as the future of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, the status of Kosovo and possible changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a member of the EU and NATO, Slovenia will remain committed to intense transatlantic dialogue. This partnership is natural, based on common values and interests, and has become increasingly more important at a time when the existing balance of power in the world is changing. After the 2004 enlargement of the EU, the meaning of good cooperation with the countries neighbouring the Union on the East has grown in importance. Slovenia is very interested in enhancing relations with these countries from the point of view of political, economic and energy stability. The same applies to cooperation with the southern EU neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Slovenia is also interested in deepening cooperation with key players on other continents, especially in the light of preparations for and the successful implementation of the EU Presidency in two years.

Dear Guests,

Allow me to thank you for your valuable contribution to maintaining and strengthening good relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the countries you represent. May I avail myself of this opportunity to express my wishes for continued good cooperation in the future. I wish you much success in your work and good health in 2006, as well as bountiful satisfaction in the endeavours of your individual lives.

Thank you.