



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

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ADDRESS

BY PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA JANEZ JANŠA
AT THE 12TH EUROPEAN SCOUT CONFERENCE
(Piran, 5 May 2007)

Welcome to Slovenia!

I am greatly honoured by your invitation to say a few words at this meeting of Scout organisations from all over Europe.

"A smile costs nothing, but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making poorer those who give it!" This popular thought best describes the legacy of Sir Robert Baden-Powell, who set the foundations of the Scout Movement with his example. "B-P", as you like to call him, once said that the most worthwhile thing is to try to put happiness into the lives of others. Tonight, seeing so many enthusiastic faces around me, I know that he was right.

Not long ago, a path led me to one of the Alpine valleys in Slovenia. By the river I met a group of Scouts cleaning up illegal waste dumps. It was really nice to see the shared effort and good humour with which they cleared the waste left by people who totally ignore the importance of a clean environment. A few steps further on I caught up with a young family whose two children were eagerly telling their parents that they, too, wanted to be just like the girls and boys whom they had seen a moment ago. They said that they would like to be able to have this kind of fun as well.

Whoever grows fond of nature at an early age will certainly know how to respect the natural environment as an adult. I spent several summers under a tent and by the camp fire, and I know that this experience has had a profound effect on my attitude towards nature and people. The awareness that the Earth was not given to us to possess but rather to protect, and that we have to preserve the planet for future generations, is becoming increasingly present among people everywhere. Unfortunately, there are still too many words and too few concrete actions, but nevertheless our conduct has been improving considerably. We can all contribute to this aim – you, especially, by educating other young people and also by all sorts of environmental protection activity. While on the other hand politicians with decisions that take into account the interests of the fifth and tenth generations of our descendants, not only the current generation. This includes, for example, decisions that reduce the percentage of carbon fuels and promote the use of renewable energy sources. It is my deepest wish that our shared love and respect for nature will never die.

Dear young people!

The Scout Movement is much more than just love of nature, closeness to nature, learning about nature and the protection of nature. Trust, loyalty, mutual respect and friendship, along with the willingness to help other people, are the principles that you chose to follow. These are the principles that each of us can easily identify with.

At the beginning of next year, Slovenia will take up the presidency of the European Union – a family of twenty-seven countries bringing together almost half a billion people, united by shared values despite some of their differences. Our priorities also include intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We believe that diversity and respect for diversity enrich mankind. A good example of such mutual understanding is your meeting here on the Slovenian coast.

The desire to learn about new and different, and the desire to overcome imaginary boundaries and mutual differences a hundred years ago led Sir Robert Baden-Powell to organise the first camp on Brownsea island for around two dozen children from different social environments in the time of the highly class-divided English society. Your decision that in the action plan for the next three-year period you will pay attention to building ties among young people in order to promote intercultural exchange, respect diversity and confront prejudice represents a continuation of his tradition.

Solidarity and assistance to underprivileged people and to those who are disadvantaged are not and must not be only *your* commitments, as embodied in your promise, laws or action plans. These are general human commitments that we are all obliged to keep to best of our abilities.

I hope that the parents whom I met the other day listened to the desire expressed by their two children. Perhaps at that moment, the children only saw the fun that the young Scouts were having together. However, in time they will grow to see the Scout Movement as a way of life, lived through the values that accompany them wherever their paths may lead them.

The central motto of your 12th Conference, "Celebrate-Motivate-Activate", has been chosen very appropriately. Despite the fact that you work on a voluntary basis without expecting any payment, sometimes even without praise, recognition of what you do is by all means very well deserved. You can be rightfully proud of your work and achievements. It is appropriate that others should learn about them, so that they may follow your example, activate themselves and join you.

I am pleased that, at the start of the second centenary of your history, you chose Slovenia and the Slovenian coast for your meeting. I am convinced that your Slovenian hosts will do everything possible to welcome you, and that you will keep returning to this part of Europe with pleasure.

I wish you successful work and a pleasant stay. I leave you with the universal Scout motto: "Be prepared"!

Thank you.