



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS

BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA JANEZ JANŠA
AT THE 10TH MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
OF THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS,
Zagreb, 10. - 11. May 2007

*Dear Chairman, Prime Minister Mr Sanader,
President of the European Council Madame Merkel,
President of the European Commission Mr Barroso,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Excellencies,*

Let me start with expression of my gratitude to our host, Prime Minister Sanader for inviting me to Zagreb. The Croatian capital once again excelled itself in its warm hospitality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fifty-five years ago Alcide De Gasperi, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, urged critics of the then infant European project to let go of the past resentments and to turn to the common future: 'Forget your fantasies about Charlemagne and the Middle Ages! This is a coalition of democracies founded on the principle of freedom. That is our bastion, that is our platform, that is our struggle!'

This region, too, had its fantasies and its Middle Ages. In fact, the origins of most of its outstanding issues can be traced back to the past. This is why it is ever more important that the countries of the South Eastern Europe share a platform for the common future.

A clear promise was made some four years ago in Thessaloniki that EU enlargement would not stop with Bulgaria and Romania. At the same time, a draft of what was to become the EU Constitution was presented to the European Council. While still trying to build its new foundations, the European Union has since moved closer to South Eastern Europe.

The countries of the region, too, have made significant steps towards the EU. For however preoccupied with its own problems the European project might seem, it abounds with opportunities for members, candidates and aspirant countries alike. The countries of the SEECP recognised this by making European adaptation a conscious choice rather than a mere obligation, as last year's Declaration reads.

Regional cooperation lies at the very core of this adaptation. Its essence is captured in two mottos from Thessaloniki: 'Neighbourhood in Cooperation' and 'Together in Europe'. As the region increases ownership of the process, reform of its cooperation scheme comes natural. With the continuity provided by the South East European Cooperation Process, the new Regional Cooperation Council will step in for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The legacy of the Stability Pact is rich. It has come up with the right challenges demanding timely answers to take the best of what pre-accession period offers. CEFTA 2006 should enter into force as early as possible. The same goes for the implementation of the Treaty on Energy Community. It will allow countries of the SEE, including candidates and aspirant countries, to become part of the EU's internal market in a key strategic sector. Pan-European transport corridors also link the region closely to the rest of Europe. The work to cut other links – those of criminal activities and illegal migration, should be strengthened.

*Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Slovenia remains vitally interested in the stabilisation and prosperity of South Eastern Europe. It is my personal intention and the objective of the Slovenian Government to upgrade all these efforts as Slovenia takes over the EU Presidency in the first half of 2008. This region will be on the top of the list of our priorities. We count on cooperation with all of you: with the SEECP and its upcoming Bulgarian Presidency, Stability Pact and its Special Coordinator and the new RCC with its first Secretary General. With high expectations for the Bucharest NATO Summit taken into account, I am sure that 2008 will be a memorable year for South Eastern Europe.

Thank you.