



Republic of Macedonia  
**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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**Address**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. Antonio Milososki  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
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Dear Chairman,

Dear Panelists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to start by expressing my appreciation to the organizers for inviting me to participate in this eminent gathering. Each year, with the choice of topics and choice of speakers, the Congress reaffirms its relevance. I am confident that the discussions in the course of these two days will contribute towards a better understanding of the European security related issues, as well as towards designing future strategies in this field.

I would also like to thank esteemed Mrs. Beer for the introduction to this topic. The issues and dilemmas raised are legitimate, while the goal is clear- how to lastingly stabilize the Balkans and release all its potentials in order to ensure the prosperity of the nations in the Region.

I am convinced that **membership of the European Union is the only possible option for the long-term stabilization of the Region.** The thus far positive experiences with the Central and East European countries are a proof of the magnetic pull of the European Union and of its positive impact on the reform process. It is only the European integration process, or the achievement of a high degree of convergence with the legal and economic order of the EU that can provide for predictable and reasonable setting for development of the regional democracies. The experiences of the past teach us that none of the thus far initiatives has that magnetic pull and capability of mobilizing all resources. Hence, imposing new solutions would only enhance the uncertainty in the Balkans.

If the question is whether we need a Master Plan for the Balkans that would steer the Region towards lasting stabilization and prosperity, my answer would be - yes. But, I would also add that we already have the Master Plan and that is the Stabilization and Association Process, which is vital and functional. This process does not ensure only harmonization of technical standards and integration of the economy; first and foremost it ensures adoption of European values- rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, as well as application of the principles of good-neighbourliness and cooperation. This Process has thus far successfully guided the regional countries

on their way to the EU: Croatia is almost at the gates of the EU, Macedonia expects opening of accession negotiations. The submitted EU membership applications and the network of Stabilization and Association Agreements speak of the vitality of this process. Visa liberalization, the entry into force of which we are looking forward will accelerate even more this process. Yet, I would have to underscore that visa liberalization is an instrument for enlargement and not a goal in its own right.

What is lacking is greater determination for more vigorous continuation of the process. We in the Region understand the context- the way out of the economic crisis will not be simple or speedy as expected. Fortunately, the uncertainty related to the institutional future of the Union has been overcome. However, the cost of leaving the Balkans outside the EU will be much higher than the cost of its integration. Let us not forget how much funds and political capital have been invested thus far. Such an investment should not be jeopardized, especially not by individual blockades against countries acceding to the Union. The European Union was born as a result of the need for lasting reconciliation and lending a helping hand, and not for imposing narrow national interests. Europe has always contributed towards softening and abating of conflicts,

towards finding solutions serving the interests of all. Europe has never been the cause for deepening of conflicts.

Any Master Plan needs to have rules following which it will be put into practice. The enlargement processes is governed by its rules - the Copenhagen criteria as an objective set of rules, which have successfully guided and steered all thus far candidate-countries. Macedonia has thus far successfully progressed on its way to the EU, in full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria. Therefore, we view any imposition of new criteria as an injustice, especially considering that there are already negotiations underway within the UN with respect to the issue imposed as a condition.

The European integration process produces manifold effects and acts in many directions- in addition to economic and political revival, it also brings about security stabilization of the countries in the Balkans, to the extent that instead of beneficiaries these countries are becoming contributors to international efforts for maintenance of peace and stability. Macedonia is a concrete example in this respect- in a matter of only three years Macedonia transformed itself from a beneficiary of the first mission of EU's European Security and Defence Policy - Concordia (2003) into a contributor to the EU Althea Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a candidate country and as a future

member-state, Macedonia is expected to assume its share of the responsibility for the preservation of global peace and stability. Led by this sense of responsibility, we have decided to increase the participation of Macedonia under the ISAF Mission in Afghanistan by 80 troops, as of next February, by which the total number of Macedonian troops would amount to 260. The absolute number might not be impressive, but this number does represent 4% of our country's total active military forces.

Furthermore, Macedonia contributes by its further proactive engagement on the advancement of relations with all neighbouring countries. In the context of the bilateral name difference with Greece, we continue our engagement with intensified dynamics, applying an active and constructive approach in the talks under UN auspices, aiming at finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Macedonia can indeed settle open issues and develop good-neighbourliness when working with a constructive partner on the other side. An example confirming this is the physical demarcation of the border with Kosovo, as our concrete contribution to the regional stability. Hence, I should like to use this opportunity, as a responsible neighbour, to underline the importance of including Kosovo in

regional initiatives and in regional projects of the European Union, such as the visa liberalization.

Macedonia believes that all outstanding issues in the Region can be resolved with equal constructiveness, in the spirit of European cooperation and good-neighbourliness, based on the principles of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Macedonia expects that the achieved reform results and the efforts invested in advancing the relations with all neighbouring countries, including the efforts invested in the settlement of the name issue, will be relevantly valorised by the European Union member-states and that **these days** the European Council will transpose the European Commission recommendation into a decision for start of negotiations for accession of Macedonia to the European Union.

The start of negotiations will be of great importance not only for our internal reform dynamics, but also for the sustainability of the Stabilization and Association Process, as a process of EU enlargement. Any delay in this process will have a discouraging effect especially on the young generations who wish to see their Macedonia

as a modern country integrated in Europe, offering them possibilities to realize their creative and entrepreneurial capabilities.

The responsibility for taking this historic chance is ours- of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and of all political actors in our country. Yet this is a shared European responsibility, as well.

Thank you for your attention.