

Redner: **Ivanov, Gjorge**
Funktion: **President of the Republic of Macedonia**
Land / Organisation: **Republic of Macedonia**
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the very outset, allow me to extend my congratulations to the organizers of this Conference, to Ambassador Ischinger and his predecessors, for establishing such an authoritative forum where we can debate one of the most vital topics and needs of human kind - security.

Exemption from the diplomatic practice of courteous exchange, liberation from past prejudices, as well as the sincere and frank approach to the topic of discussion, are the preconditions for debate and for the establishment of future policy directions.

I come from a region which used to produce instability and concern. Therefore, I will try to make an assessment of the state of play. I will particularly refer to the role of my country, the Republic of Macedonia, regionally and in the wider context related to this topic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The security of our continent is unimaginable without a stable Southeast Europe. We should speak frankly and say that a single statement or a premature act can produce turbulence, whereas problems and open issues are always there. The complexity of situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the lack of unity within the international community, EU and NATO, the situation in Kosovo, bring about risks which must not be underestimated. The recipe is very simple, rapid integration of the entire region in Euro-Atlantic structures, political decisions with a vision and of long term benefit. Past experiences have shown that our region survived in peace only when on open space. Now, we face new circumstances. For the first time in history, at the transition between the 20th and the 21st century, we have democratically elected governments. And again, we are in need of open space. Today, our region is in need of what I like to name as the Pax Europana. Because the entire European idea is a peace project in itself. Now is again the time for the European idea to produce peace through the Balkans — something that generations of statesmen and visionaries in Europe and NATO had already been doing. Only if all countries move forward may we count on sustainable, lasting stability and security. A prolonged status quo situation in the region bears risks, both of political and security nature. Everyone is well aware of how difficult it is to alleviate the consequences of security crises.

The zone of stability and security expands with every new NATO and EU enlargement. This is the way to contribute to a common aim. The countries from our region are even more determined in their approach towards the fulfilment of all standards and criteria bringing them one step closer to integration.

In such circumstances, the Republic of Macedonia was an example of a stability and security producer and peace contributor.

However, the series of conflicts from the end of the 20th Century, affected my country in 2001. The outcome of that conflict produced a model which may be helpful in solving similar problems in other parts of the world. The incorporation of the political agreement otherwise known as the Ohrid Framework Agreement, within the Constitution, which prevented a greater crisis, and yet its implementation, is one excellent example of good handling of security challenges.

Life in a multiethnic, multi-confessional and multi-lingual environment gradually created a specific model of cohabitation. In the transition towards democracy, this complexity reflected itself on the institutional system in the Republic of Macedonia. Indeed, great attention, time and energy have

been invested in the process of building substantial democracy. The model of integration without assimilation, the inclusive model of multiethnic democracy, which represents a real challenge for many countries nowadays, has become reality in the Republic of Macedonia. This is of course, not a definite process. We continue to upgrade this model at a daily basis. In this way, the Republic of Macedonia creates stability and security in a rather neuralgic region. This, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the true strength of the Republic of Macedonia. A positive example to be used by other societies as well. Our inclusive model of democracy is our contribution to regional and European security.

Allow me to briefly elaborate on the functionality of this model. Although in very complex circumstances, the Republic of Macedonia managed to implement reforms and to achieve standards. It succeeded in meeting NATO standards and is prepared to begin the pre-accession negotiations with the EU, and has managed to continuously maintain its macroeconomic stability in line with the EU regulations in the last two decades. This is not a subjective assessment, this has indeed been confirmed at the NATO Summit in Bucharest and last year's EC Progress Report recommending the beginning of accession negotiations,

This reality in the Republic of Macedonia is also reflected in the composition of our peace-keeping missions. Although we are not a member of the Alliance, we actively participate in almost all peace-keeping missions. What we consider important is not to allow any threats generated from the crisis regions affect our stability and this model. We put our soldiers at the disposal for the defense of freedom and democratic values, but also for European and global security. Today's global threats demand a global response. This is the reason why my country is the fourth nation by its military force contribution in Afghanistan where these values are being protected. With its 19 years of independence and 7 years of contribution to world peace, the Republic of Macedonia, by rotations in international missions so far has deployed a total of 1844 Macedonian peacekeepers (1/4 of our Army).

With this, we take care of our security, but also contribute at the global level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Internal stability and security, however, are in strong correlation with the security in Southeast Europe. Therefore, what the Republic of Macedonia does at the internal level creates a positive ambiance in the region. This is also the reason why boosting and building good relations with neighbours are some of the most significant benchmarks for Macedonian foreign policy.

Since its independence, the Republic of Macedonia managed to replace the historic context of irreconcilability, of differences among the Balkan nations, with the establishment of good-neighbourly relation policies which rest upon common interests and regional development. In this sense, the Republic of Macedonia has been undertaking numerous activities and initiatives. The establishment of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kosovo, is considered as another step forward in building dose, correct and functional neighbourly relations. In this case which still creates inconvenience in terms of regional relations, the Republic of Macedonia acted in accordance with its interests, the interests of the predominant majority in the EU and NATO, organizations where we see our future. With the demarcation of the northern border with Kosovo, we resolved one major security issue. This is another example of our successful resolution of challenges of this nature. The significance of this act is also shown by the fact that issues of this kind continue to burden the relations between different countries, and not only in our region.

Distinguished participants,

Building good-neighbourly relations requires mutual commitments and engagement of all stakeholders.

Allow me to briefly refer to the dispute regarding our constitutional name imposed by our southern neighbour. Ever since the early days of independence, by imposing this dispute and the subsequent developments, it seemed as if someone was bothered by the new reality — an independent Republic of Macedonia. This dispute and the attitude of our neighbour had implications in the process of international recognition and establishment of our country. It was accompanied by negations, humiliation, blockades and embargos, resulted in precedent for UN accession. Fully unjustified,

even absurd, this dispute was presented by our neighbour as a security problem. At that time, but also today, they misled the international community. The alleged arguments of our neighbour in this context were that we had territorial claims. Although these allegations were fully unfounded, the Republic of Macedonia amended its Constitution in order to formally prove that it had no territorial claims — even the national flag was changed. With this, the Republic of Macedonia made some specific steps which I am not sure would have been made by someone else from the international community. At that time, the Republic of Macedonia, conscious of the seriousness of the overall domestic and regional circumstances, but also aware of its international duties, agreed to discuss the possibilities for overcoming the “name difference“. The two countries signed the Interim Accord in 1995, and afterwards the relations were normalized.

Unfortunately, in spite of Republic of Macedonia’s constructiveness and initiative for resolving this problem, at the Summit in Bucharest in 2008, completely opposite to the obligations of the Interim Accord, the Hellenic Republic blocked our NATO accession. If the Greek argument was that Macedonia is a security concern because of its name the Republic of Macedonia, then why did Greece block our NATO accession? Why did Greece dare to breach an international agreement, the 1995 Interim Accord and did not allow the Republic of Macedonia to become a NATO member under the provisional reference used within the UN? It would have been the best guarantee for Greece that Macedonia is not a security threat to none of its neighbours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, intended for the countries of South-Eastern Europe, to mark their road towards EU integration. My country was the first to sign this Agreement. Ten years later, it is time to ask ourselves what has been accomplished from the duties deriving from this Agreement, by both parties:

by the states it refers to, but also by the EU which ensured that perspective. The fact that the Republic of Macedonia was the first to sign the Agreement, obtain candidate status in 2005, and finally, last year received a recommendation from the European Commission for launching the accession negotiations, speaks enough for our position in the equation. Each postponement of the integration process was greatly and directly due, unfortunately, to the politics of blockage by our southern neighbour, which, according to common sense, was supposed to be the main promoter of Macedonia’s membership in the Union.

Last December, in spite of the positive EC recommendation, recognizing the readiness and the progress made by my country, Greece blocked the setting of the date for opening accession negotiations with the EU. This means a second blockage in a very short period of time. Is that a contribution to European security and prosperity? Nevertheless, we do expect some specific steps from the Greek side which would confirm their dedication to the 2014 agenda.

Dear participants,

We must state that, unfortunately, the condition imposed to us so that we can proceed on the path of our Euro-Atlantic integration, does not only involve renouncing the name of our country, but also renouncing the individual human rights of my fellow-citizens, the right to human dignity and self-identification. According to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights“ No country should allow the rights of its citizens to be violated, neither from the inside nor from the outside. These are the foundations of not only international public law, but also international human rights law. That is the highest objective of humanity. That is the strongest guarantee to move forward on the path of progress and security. The Republic of Macedonia, having realized all this, is doing its best, being active and making initiatives for resolution of this problem. However, we shall not accept the violation of individual human rights by means of force or blackmail. We shall not accept the breach of international law principles to be breached, not only because of us, but also because of the ravaging domino effect which may be caused by a single unprincipled precedent.

Not long ago, my colleague, the Greek President Papoulias stated that the solution should be sought within the frames of international law. I couldn't agree more. We want a solution based on international law and principles, a solution within the UN Resolutions, a solution without winners and losers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

United Europe is the largest project on the old continent, and here I would add, a civilization-scale project. It is a project that produces peace, stability and prosperity, a project based on the values and contributions of democracy and freedom. EU, with the Lisbon Treaty, reached a consensus over the strategic priorities, the new internal setting, over its ever-stronger role on the international arena, but even more importantly for us, it created a basis for finalization of the enlargement process. Today, we need a Vision for the Balkans, a vision for our European and global security and its future. Let me finish by saying that we cannot speak on the future of European security and stability, we cannot create strategies and policies without a stable and secure Southeast Europe. Our area has been a source of conflicts and misunderstandings of regional and global powers. It is how the myth for the so-called 'Macedonian question' was created. In 1991 finally there was a response to this question: the Republic of Macedonia, as an independent European country, peaceful and open towards all its neighbours, without any exception!

Thank you for your attention.

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!