



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

Pils laukums 3, Rīga-50, LV-1900, tālr. 7092122, fakss 7320404,  
prese@president.lv, www.president.lv

---

### **Address of the State President V.Vike-Freiberga "Governance in the EU: Enlargement in Perspective" at the Bicerius Summer School on Global Governance, Berlin**

Prof. Gring,

Dr. Summer,

It is here in Berlin that German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer rekindled the debate on Europe's future, during an address at Humboldt University more than two years ago. Now the Convention on the Future of Europe, which began its deliberations earlier this year, is providing a useful forum for the expression of a wide variety of opinions, and I am pleased that parliamentary deputies and government officials from Latvia and the other EU candidate countries are actively participating in the Conventions discussions.

Latvia hopes that the democratic method of reaching mutually acceptable compromises at the negotiating table will also be followed when the end results of the Conventions discussions are put forward at the next Intergovernmental Conference. Latvia and other future EU member countries look forward to participating in this conference on an equal footing with the present EU members, as this would ensure that the Union's newest members are able to exercise all of the rights and obligations that EU membership entails, and that the decisions taken at the IGC enjoy a maximum degree of legitimacy among the EU's citizens.

In Latvia, we see the Conventions deliberations not only as a means to formulate a common European vision. We also see them as a forum of public debate. We are encouraging active discussions within Latvia on the future course of both our country and our continent. We would like as many citizens as possible to be as informed as possible by the time they vote next year in a referendum on Latvia's accession to the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our meeting here today is taking place on August 23rd, which is a particularly black day in the history of Europe. In 1939 on this date, the Foreign Ministers of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia secretly agreed to divide Central and Eastern Europe into German and Russian spheres of influence. This underhanded agreement paved the way for the German invasion of Poland one week later, and for the beginning of the Second World War, which brought more death, destruction and misery to our continent than any other armed conflict in recorded history.

As a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were plundered by two totalitarian regimes, and erased from the map of Europe for more than half a century. Hundreds of thousands of individuals from the three Baltic countries were either killed or sent to slave labour camps by the Nazis and the Soviets, while hundreds of thousands of others fled into exile. Nearly every single person in Latvia has at least one family member who was either killed, deported, forcefully conscripted into the army of one occupying power or the other, or who fled to another country. For five long decades, the economic, social and cultural development of the three Baltic countries which before the war had attained Western European levels was severely curtailed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

---

If the cynical agreement of August 23 had not taken place, then not only Latvias, but also Europes history as a whole, might have been entirely different. If, immediately after the end of the First World War, Europeans embraced the reconciliatory and unifying ideals propounded by the French visionaries Aristide Briand and Robert Schuman, and by Latvias first Foreign Minister Zigfrds Meierovics, then we may have avoided the calamities and the bloodshed of the Second World War. We would have also avoided the subsequent division of Europe into two opposing camps that for decades were physically separated by minefields, concrete walls, watchtowers and barbed wire fences. Far-reaching proposals on the future of Europe of the kind that we are hearing today might have been put forward many years earlier. This historical example illustrates that we must be able to learn from the errors of our past in order to make wiser decisions for the future.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, we are at an important crossroads. We are being presented with the historic opportunity to right the wrongs of the 20th century, and to create a stronger and more united European continent. This is a priority for both the current and future member states of the European Union. That is why Latvia and her Baltic neighbours are doing their part to ensure that they can contribute fully to Europes future, and that they are fully prepared to join the Union by the year 2004. Latvia expects to complete its accession negotiations with the European Union later this year, and I am hopeful that Latvians will be able to participate in the next election of the European Parliament in two years time.

Although Latvia has not yet attained the economic prosperity of its Western neighbours, the transformations that my country has undergone have been nothing less than remarkable.

When Latvia regained its independence eleven years ago, it had to assume the monumental task of overhauling a bankrupt, State-run economy and finding new markets for its exports, all of which for decades had been sent eastward to Russia and other Soviet republics. Today, Latvias transformation to a liberal market economy can be considered a success story of rebirth and renewal. During the past few years, Latvia has had one of the fastest economic growth rates in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as one of the lowest inflation rates and a stable national currency, which have consolidated the countrys macro-economic stability. In eleven short years, Latvia has successfully replaced a totalitarian system of governance with democratically elected political institutions. It has become a country where human rights and basic freedoms are upheld and respected to the same degree as in other liberal democracies.

And Latvias close regional co-operation with its Baltic and Nordic neighbours is facilitating its return to the family of stable and prosperous European nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Together, Europes democratic nations, both young and old, face the challenge of implementing the most extensive enlargement process that Europe has ever experienced. They face the challenge of creating a Europe that can effectively deal with such pressing global concerns as unemployment and poverty, illegal immigration and cross-border crime, drug addiction and disease, environmental pollution, and international terrorism. These urgent issues present such serious challenges in our globalized world that they can only hope to be addressed by uniting the efforts of the EUs current and future members.

Globalization has provided unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, scientific innovation, the spread of information and the bridging of cultural divides. But it has also given rise to the need for global solutions to increasingly global problems. In the past, unions and alliances between sovereign states have usually been established to deal against common threats. However, if such supranational organizations as the European Union are to endure, then the foundations for their existence must be based on positive ideals that are shared by Europes diverse member-states and citizens.

In some respects, Europe must continue on the path of increased political, economic and social integration. That is why Latvia favours a strong and effectively functioning Commission and community institutions.

This does not entail the creation of a monolithic, European super-state, but rather the reform of the EUs institutions so as to render them more effective, open and transparent; less bureaucratic; and closer to the people they have been designed to serve.

The fact that only 38% of eligible voters participated in the most recent elections of the European Parliament indicates that many Europeans feel alienated from the institutions of the EU. The governments of both the member and candidate countries must therefore devote more effort to explain the EUs policies to their electorates, if the blame Brussels for everything syndrome is to be curtailed.

Serious thought might also be given to the principle of subsidiarity, under which decision-making is relegated to the lowest levels governance wherever possible, thereby rendering it closer to the people. I believe that Europe simultaneously requires the centralization of some powers regarding pressing issues of overriding concern, along with the decentralization of other powers regarding matters that can be more effectively dealt with at the national and municipal levels.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Latvia regards the EU as one of the most successful supranational projects in the continents history, and Latvia wishes to strengthen this undertaking. One of the European Unions principal assets has been its emphasis on consensus-making, as well as a finely balanced power structure that prevents any one institution from predominating over others. The EU is an organization of equal and sovereign partners, where relationships between member-states are based on mutual respect, and where the interests of all members are taken into account.

It will not bode well for Europes future if this principle of equality is changed, and if some of the EUs larger countries obtain a disproportionate say in important decision-making processes at the expense of their smaller neighbours.

The EUs citizens will also have to decide whether or not they wish to strengthen to role of the European Union in international affairs. If this is to happen, then the EUs member states will have to continue their efforts in establishing a common defence and security policy. They will also have to implement unpopular economic reforms in order to make the EU and its member states more efficient and competitive in world markets. Latvia hopes that the EUs member states implement the commitments that they undertook in Lisbon, that they come to an agreement on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and that they continue to open their economies.

In the field of security, the continued threat of terrorist activity following the September 11 attacks has increased the need for Europes law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies to coordinate their activities and establish new form of cooperation in the fight against international terrorism and organized crime. That is why I believe that now more than ever, the Euro-Atlantic community needs to be strengthened and consolidated through the continued expansion of the European Union and the NATO Alliance. Latvia and several other aspirant countries hope to receive invitations to join these two organizations later this year. I am convinced that NATO, as the strongest and most effective military alliance in history, can serve a crucial role in dealing with terrorist as well as military threats to Europes security. And I am convinced that the accession of Latvia and other renewed democracies to the Alliance will make a meaningful and valuable contribution to its capabilities and resources.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The integration of Europe is a unique process that has no parallels in the history of human civilization. Latvia and other former captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe

---

are ready, willing and able to join the European Union and the NATO Alliance. I devoutly hope that the EU and NATO are ready, willing and able to admit the most eligible aspirant countries into their fold. I believe that these two parallel and complementary integration processes are vital for Europes continued stability and prosperity, and I am firmly convinced that we all both the current and future member states of the European Union and the NATO Alliance would benefit greatly from an expanded Transatlantic partnership.

For centuries, the dream of a secure, stable and prosperous European continent has been an elusive one. Now, for the first time in our history, we have the opportunity to make it become a reality. We have already achieved a great deal during the past decade to bring Europes countries closer together than ever before. I am confident that we will ultimately succeed in the construction of a new and better Europe for our future generations.