



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Speech of the President of Latvia, H.E. Vaira Vīke Freiberga at the Summit Meeting of the Participant Countries of the International Conference Baltic Black Sea Co-operation: to the Integrated Europe of the 21st Century Free of Dividing Lines, Yalta, 10**

Mr. Chairman!

Your Excellencies!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to our host, the President of the Ukraine, for this opportunity of visiting this beautiful part of his country. I truly appreciate Ukraines initiative to enhance the excellent beginning of the high level multilateral dialogue established in Vilnius two years ago.

For Latvians, the name of Yalta has been engraved in our memories as the place that hosted the Conference of 1945. That was a dark day in European history, which set up the bases for a divided Europe, a division that later was to become an Iron Curtain, a division that was to take tangible form in the building of the Berlin wall. Europe was now split into two separate and mutually hostile spheres of influence. Half of Europe was liberated, and could go on to rebuild on the ruins of the War. The other half was handed over to a brutally totalitarian regime. This was done with complete disregard for the hopes, wishes and aspirations of the many millions of lives that had now become hostages to international expediency. That was the heritage of the Yalta Conference of 1945.

Today we meet in a new Yalta, in a new Europe and in a new and independent Ukraine. We all stand on the threshold of a new century, with the common commitment of making it the Century of an Integrated Europe. We stand with the firm commitment to erase once and for all the kinds of dividing lines that have done so much harm in the past. A Europe Free of Dividing Lines is no longer an idealistic dream, it is not a figment of the imagination. A Europe Free of Dividing Lines is a practical necessity, it is an inescapable precondition to peace, stability and civilisation.

The Europe of the 21st Century will be a Union freely entered into by equal and sovereign states, and it will be a Europe in a continuing process of expansion. This expansion has already encompassed the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A unique process has been launched, where nations are brought together on the basis of shared values and the principles of democracy. The time has now come to enlarge and consolidate the area of stability and development on this continent. This means that the Europe of to-morrow must also enclose in its purview the countries of the Black Sea region.

Just over a month ago most of us were present at the historic Stability Pact Inauguration Summit in Sarajevo. There is a lot more that the international community can do in order to prevent such tragic events as have taken place in that region of South Eastern Europe. No country can see its future and development in isolation. What we need is co-operation and constant interaction with other nations sharing this continent.

It needs a lot of political courage and commitment from politicians in all countries to take responsible decisions about the future of their country. Decisions that may not necessarily be appealing or popular, but that do provide a clear model of development in a

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long term perspective. Ultimately, it will be our own successes or failures that will create the objective reality that we will have to live in.

The opportunity of European integration has provided a remarkably strong motivation for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to facilitate changes in their societies and we should use it to the maximum extent. In this respect I would like to express my particular appreciation of the progress that has been already achieved in the Ukraine. The role of this country in ensuring the overall stability of Europe in the next century is and will remain of the highest political importance.

European integration is not only about structures and institutions, however important they might be. It is also about the ability of politicians to work together, of enhancing co-operation between various sub-regions of Europe. There can only be one criterion to this end the existence of shared democratic principles and values.

I am confident that the discussions over the coming days will make a meaningful contribution to this goal. Let me wish every success to the participants of the conference in their common efforts. I am convinced that meetings like this are yet another step towards making our world a safer and more prosperous place.

Thank you.