



Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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Address by H. E. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of Latvia, at the inauguration ceremony of President Viktor Yushchenko in Kiev, Ukraine, January 23, 2005

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Ukrainian friends,

It is with great emotion that I stand here today, in this historical place, surrounded by so many happy and triumphant faces. I stand here with you in your moment of victory, as in my heart I stood with you throughout the days and weeks of your heroic struggle.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, for your historic victory. You have bravely faced death and disfigurement, you have stood up for your cause with unfailing courage and determination, you have given new hope to your people, you are the one who led them to victory. In the name of the people and government of Latvia, I assure you of our full support, I assure you of our sympathy for your aspirations and values, I assure you of our readiness to assist your nation in every possible way.

And I congratulate you, the people of Ukraine, everyone who was on the Maidan and everyone all across your great country, for the historic victory that you have snatched out of the jaws of what was meant to be your defeat. I congratulate you for the tenacity to stay your course in spite of fierce opposition. I congratulate you for the strength of your resolve and your courage in the face of uncertainty and possible danger.

I admire you for your readiness to endure weeks of hardship in the name of your democratic rights. I respect you for your refusal to allow these rights to be taken away from you.

We in Latvia know only too well what it means to fight for ones rights and freedoms. This very month, fourteen years ago, the people of Latvia went to their barricades, just like you, in the bitter cold and the dark of midwinter, to stand up with their bare hands against a mighty army, to proclaim to the world that they were now ready to take their destiny in their own hands.

This Orange Revolution of Ukraine now takes its historic place alongside the Singing Revolution of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, it joins the Velvet Revolution of the former Czechoslovakia and other popular movements of Central and Eastern Europe.

It joins the Rose Revolution of Georgia as a signal that sovereignty takes on its full meaning only when it rests on full democratic rights, the rule of law, responsibility and justice. All these movements, as powerful manifestations of the will of the people, have been peaceful revolutions that have radically changed the fate of their nations, that have transformed the political landscape of our whole continent.

You, people of Ukraine, have won this battle, but your struggle is not over. You have won the right for your voice to be heard in open and fair elections, free of manipulation and falsifications. You now face the task of reforming your countrys political, economic and social structures; of consolidating democracy and a civil society. You face the weight of

responsibility that comes with the freedom of choice. Your future remains in your hands.

I can tell you from Latvia's experience that change is not easy. Reforms can be difficult and their effects can be painful. But I can also tell you from our experience, that they are worth the price, they are worth every effort. The road to progress and prosperity is made up of many steps. Each step you take takes you closer to your goal. Each step that you take will show you how far you have come.

We, people of Latvia, would like to encourage you in your efforts. We would like to see Ukraine having closer relations with the European Union, not just economic ones, but ties of equal respect for fundamental democratic values. You are our neighbours. We care for you. We wish you well.

To you, Mr. President, we wish health, strength and success in your leadership and happiness in seeing your efforts bear fruit. To you, the Ukrainian people, I wish you to keep your courage and resolve through all the difficulties that you will be facing.

Have faith in yourselves, have faith in your leadership, have faith in your country. You will overcome.

God bless Ukraine! God bless its president and its people!