



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Address by H.E. Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia, at the state dinner held in honour of her official visit by H.E. Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of Moldova, Chisinau, Moldova, 3 April 2006**

Mr. President,  
Madame Voronin,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to begin by extending my sincere thanks to you, Mr. President, to you, Madame Voronin, to the government and to the people of Moldova for the warm reception that we have received in your beautiful country. This is my first ever visit to Moldova and I think that we can all be very pleased at the close links of friendship and cooperation that Latvia and Moldova have developed since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries in 1992.

Our discussions today were most productive and fruitful, and we can take immense satisfaction at the continued intensification of the dialogue that is taking place between Latvia and Moldova at both the political and economic level. Last year I had the pleasure of receiving you, Mr. President, and Madame Voronin in Riga. The speakers of our parliaments also met in 2005, and two weeks ago Latvia's foreign minister received a warm welcome here in Chisinau. Soon we can expect a visit by Moldova's defence minister to Riga. The number of visits by our countries' experts to each others' capital cities are too numerous to mention. These are all clear indications of our countries' mutual interest in strengthening their relations, of their adherence to the same overarching values of freedom and democracy, and of a shared vision of the future at both the European and global level. Our shared ideals and convictions provide a firm foundation for the continued development of our countries' bilateral relations.

Mr. President,

From the very moment that Latvia regained its independence 15 years ago, my country assumed the path of integration into pan-European and Transatlantic structures. This path was fraught with difficulties and major challenges. It involved the implementation of unpopular decisions for the sake of the overall good of the country.

That is why I wish to stress Latvia's unequivocal support to the people of Moldova in the choices they have made and in the reforms they have undertaken. We will stand by you and be ready to assist you in your efforts to establish closer ties with the European Union and the NATO alliance. We understand the difficulties you face and are ready to share with your country our own experience of reforms. Earlier today, Latvia and Moldova signed an intergovernmental development cooperation agreement, as well as a cooperation agreement in the field of defence. I urge our Moldovan friends to make full use of the opportunities that these agreements provide, and to actively solicit the assistance of Latvia's experts. We will help you to the best of our abilities. Latvia is eager to see Moldova develop as a prosperous and democratic nation, and as a country that establishes an increasingly close partnership with the European Union.

Regarding the Transdnestr region, Latvia fully supports Moldova's aspirations to re-establish its territorial integrity in a peaceful manner. As a member of the European Union and the NATO alliance, Latvia will continue to mobilize international support for a timely resolution of this important issue.

Mr. President,

As I mentioned during our discussions earlier today, the Latvian government decided last week to cancel the visa processing fees that currently apply for Moldovan citizens. This welcome measure will take effect on May the 1st, and will make it much easier for our countries to strengthen their ties not only at the political level, but at the individual level as well.

Although our two countries may be separated by a considerable geographical distance, we share many common attributes, both in our ancient and more recent history. Each of our small nations has had to struggle to maintain its language, culture and identity under foreign occupation, and each has succeeded in doing so. During the national reawakening at the end of the 1980s, our nations struggled valiantly for the establishment of freedom and democracy. Latvia's Singing Revolution became a mass movement supported by practically the entire population. Today, I am pleased to recall one of the songs that came to symbolize Latvia's struggle for freedom during that time. The song is entitled *Native Language*, and the author of its words is Moldova's own native son, Grigore Vieru. The Latvian version of this song was masterfully translated by one of my country's most esteemed modern-day poets, Imants Ziedonis. This example is but one of many indications of the values and ideals we hold in common.

Mr. President,

I should like to raise this toast to your personal health and happiness, to the health and happiness of Madame Voronin, to the happiness and prosperity of the people of Moldova, and to the development of increasingly close and friendly ties between our two nations.