

**International Conference „Georgia´s European Way“**  
**Future cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership**

speech delivered by

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Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is an honour for me to be invited to this ancient country of rugged mountains and determined people. Country, that is situated at the dividing line of Asia and Europe. In the globalised world cultural identity is first and foremost a matter of values. And in this sense, I believe that with the Rose Revolution, Georgia has made a clear choice. You stepped forward on your European way at the very same moment, when your people decided to sign up to the same values that the European Union is founded on – those of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and market economy. And let me stress here that changing borders by military force goes directly against these values. We are strongly committed to Georgia´s territorial integrity.
- I am here today to speak about our future cooperation within the Eastern partnership. In other words, everything has been said but not by everyone. Let me first say a few words about the underlying arguments for EU to launch this initiative.
  - First, Eastern partnership is in a way a **strategic projection of the 2004 and 2007 eastern enlargements into the EU´s policy.** Prior to 2004 the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe were the immediate Eastern neighborhood of the EU. Today, it is you, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine... After the enlargement, in spite of the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU lacked a **coherent, tailor-made framework for cooperation with its**

**partner countries in its so called „new“ Eastern neighborhood.** Eastern partnership is supposed to bridge this gap.

- **Second, Eastern partnership has a clear strategic justification – all will benefit from more security, stability and prosperity.** Recent events, such as the war in Georgia (the painful reminder of which is the unacceptable lasting occupation of 1/5 of your territory), or the gas crisis (which left half of the EU freezing in the beginning of this year), have clearly shown, that some of the major future international challenges will come from the East. Stabilizing this region is in the interest of all.
- Third, while thinking of the design of Eastern partnership, we were aware that deepened relationship between EU and its neighbors cannot be based on “lecturing”, and this has been said a couple of times. We felt, that if Eastern Partnership was to work, it must be an inclusive, mutually beneficial framework, based on mutual commitments. I would like to point out that from the very beginning we are speaking about a partnership that, by definition, is voluntary and mutually beneficial. The European Union has **offered the six partner countries to help implement their reforms**; it wants to listen to the six partner countries and to respond to their needs. The joint ownership of the Eastern Partnership is fundamental for its successful implementation.
- **Fourth, it is not an anti-Russian policy.** On the contrary. Russia, our important partner in the East, is to benefit from the inclusive character of this partnership and from the cooperation and stability it is supposed to bring. With Russia, the EU has already comprehensive and structured relationship.

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- In sum, the Eastern partnership was one of the **key foreign policy priorities of the just finished Czech EU Presidency**. We were honoured to **launch the initiative by adopting a joint declaration at a formal summit on 7 May in Prague**. We were also glad to ensure the necessary funding for the startup of the initiative – 600million EUR was put in the pot by the Spring European Council, but I agree that we need to secure a corresponding part of the money for the future. We believe Eastern partnership is a key step for accelerating political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries, promoting stability and multilateral confidence building.
- At the Prague summit the **speakers strongly supported** the Eastern Partnership, nevertheless some pointed out that it was not a *carte blanche* – the “shared ownership” of the initiative is the cornerstone of its implementation, nevertheless the implementation itself will be conditional on, among other things, the state of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights in partner countries.

What can I add as far as the content of the Eastern Partnership?

- **The Eastern partnership has two components** – a bilateral one and a multilateral one. In its **bilateral dimension**, it offers to deepen cooperation in the fields of trade and energy, to endorse the processes of democratisation and transformation, facilitate mobility, support people-to-people contacts, institutions and companies at all levels. To give just some concrete examples:
  - I. We would like to offer to those partner countries that are interested **New Association Agreements** which, beyond the framework of

existing trade opportunities and investments, will provide for the establishment of **deeper and comprehensive free trade areas**.

- II. Liberalization will be strengthened by regulatory approximation leading to **convergence with EU laws and standards** in those partner countries willing to make progress in coming closer to the EU.
  - III. A comprehensive **institution-building programme** tailored to the needs of each individual partner country will be proposed. We want to work individually with each partner country in order to improve their administrative capacity, including through training, technical assistance and any appropriate innovative measures.
  - IV. **Mobility of citizens and visa liberalisation** will be worked on in order to enhance people-to-people contacts
- **In the field of multilateral cooperation** of the EU and the six countries **four platforms of cooperation are proposed** and they were all mentioned here. The underlying idea is that multilateral cooperation – not only between EU and the six, but also between the partners themselves - can contribute to overcoming differences and protracted conflicts, that seemingly make cooperation in the Southern Caucasus region impossible.
  - Let me say a few words about **platform 1 – democracy, good governance and stability** – the EU considers democracy, good governance and stability to be of fundamental importance - not only for the political and economic development of our six Eastern European partners. These are principles and values on which the EU has built its own success in the process of deepening European integration.
  - I want to stress that we are not speaking about any revolutionary principles or idealistic values. The EU perceives democracy as a

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pragmatic concept which is comprised of well-functioning legitimate institutions and the principle of the rule of law. All of those promote stability and thus prosperity, and you heard in much more detailed way what is behind these words.

- Last but not least, the framework of Eastern Partnership will provide for **intensified political contacts**: Meetings of Heads of State or Government of the Eastern Partnership will be held in principle every two years. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs will meet every year. Eight multilateral meetings a year will take place at deputy minister level. These meetings will move and shape the Eastern Partnership further and will add a political steering.

### **Early implementation**

- Ladies and Gentlemen, the Czech Presidency contributed towards defining the concept and the formal launching of the Eastern Partnership. As the country holding the EU Presidency, we encouraged **an early and successful start of the first steps of the initiative**, particularly in the field of multilateral cooperation on thematic platforms. The first meeting of the four platforms was organised by the European Commission in June with encouraging outcome.
- Early implementation is indeed the real challenge now and I am happy to say that the Commission is doing a great job. The basic work programme has been approved at the above mentioned June meeting on the working level. The core objectives of the multilateral platforms should be ready sometime in summer. The definition of concrete projects will have to follow as soon as possible.

- *Before I finish, let me outline briefly the Czech priorities for each multilateral platform. We are deeply convinced that the Eastern Partnership should be project-based and result-oriented endeavor. This is the only way to achieve concrete changes on the ground.*

**1) PLATFORM 1 - Democracy, good governance and stability**

- *Security and stability in the region can be best ensured if local stakeholders are involved. We will therefore support the **involvement of partner countries into the CFSP and ESDP missions**, which should promote sharing best practices.*
- *Given the fact that long-term improvement of democracy and human rights situation is only viable if it happens in a bottom-up process, we would like to **support the local administrations and administrative capacities**.*

**2) PLATFORM 2 - Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies**

- *We perceive the approximation of regulatory framework in the area of trade as crucial, along with supporting businesses and complying with the principles of market economy – this will help our partner states comply with the commitments imposed by deepened and comprehensive free trade agreements with the EU and from the WTO membership.*
- *Apart from that we will support exchange of experience and best practices in the area on environment*
- *as well as multilateral cooperation in the area of health-care.*

**3) PLATFORM 3 - Energy security**

- *Energy security can be strengthened by decreasing energy dependency on a single supplier – we will therefore support interconnection and diversification of supply projects in the region*
- *It is in the same line of thinking that we would like to enhance energy solidarity by developing the Action plan on energy infrastructure and by providing increased political and practical support to developing the Southern Corridor.*

**4) PLATFORM 4 - Contacts between people**

- *Bringing societies closer together and opening up new perspectives to people is a great motivating factor and an engine of change. We will therefore support exchanges of students (ie via*

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*programmes Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, etc), as well as academics and scientists*

- *Last but not least, improving access to information is a catalyst of transformation – we will therefore support the development of information society in partner countries.*
- I believe that our Swedish colleagues, who were co-authors of the Eastern partnership concept and who have now taken over the EU Presidency for the second half of 2009, will continue to support the Eastern Partnership with equal spirit and enthusiasm as we did. Also, the fact, that the Commission is in charge with conducting the implementation, fills me with great confidence that keeping the momentum of the Eastern Partnership is granted far beyond the Czech and Swedish Presidencies.
- **Ladies and gentlemen, the Eastern Partnership carries a lasting political message**, particularly the message of solidarity of the EU, and endorses pro-democratic and pro-market reforms and the development of human rights. This enhances the stability, security and prosperity of the EU, its partners and the whole continent. **I wish all of us every success in this shared effort.** Thank you for your attention.