

**REPORT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WŁADYSŁAW
BARTOSZEWSKI ON THE TASKS OF POLISH FOREIGN POLICY IN 2001
THE SEJM, JUNE 6TH 2001**

Mister President,

Mister Speaker,

Mister Prime Minister,

Members of the House!

I have the honor of presenting to the House the tasks of the Polish foreign policy in 2001 at a special moment - just three months before the parliamentary election and not quite a year since assuming the post of the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, I do that with full conviction, for two reasons:

- there is broad agreement of all the basic political forces in the sphere of foreign policy of the Polish State; that is a circumstance, which - let me emphasize it strongly - has significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the Polish policy in this sphere, at the same time consolidating the image of Poland abroad as a stable, solid democracy;
- on the other hand, thanks to that circumstance, I have a deep conviction that the strategic directions of the Polish foreign policy will be consistently implemented regardless of the future political composition of parliament, and that my assessments and suggestions will be taken into consideration.

Using this opportunity, I would like to thank the House, particularly the deputies and senators involved in various international parliamentary bodies, for their consistent endeavors in representing Polish interests abroad.

I would also like to stress here my high appreciation of the constructive collaboration with the President in solving complicated and important foreign policy problems of the Republic of Poland.

Members of the House,

Before I move on to the main topic, I would like to share with the House a few reflections, summing up the period since the previous debate in the Sejm, though it is hard to generalize here, since we are witnessing a remarkable momentum in the Polish foreign policy. Still, I can justly state, that the process of shaping a sovereign foreign policy of Poland - initiated more than ten years ago - is beginning to yield concrete, positive results:

- Poland enjoys stability in the sphere of security policy, which is guaranteed by our membership of the North Atlantic Alliance, obtained two years ago; at the same time, however, Poland bears higher international co-responsibility and needs to speed up transformation of its armed forces;
- Poland has established durable, good-neighborly relations - which lends stability, security and democratic values to international and regional structures;

- Poland is a valued and active partner in regional structures: I point this out, because involvement in integration processes does not undermine regional structures - on the contrary, the deeper the integration processes - the more important it becomes to express regional and local interests;

- Poland is a country expanding its activity on a global scale - the last few months have brought initiatives focused on regions which had so far remained in the background; undeniable successes of the Polish foreign policy include the world conference of foreign ministers "Toward a Community of Democracies" (June 2000) and the chairing by the Polish President of one of the Four Round Tables of the UN Millennium Summit (September 2000);

- Finally, Poland is concluding its negotiations leading to membership of the European Union. After having gained membership of the North Atlantic Alliance, entry into the Union will complete the historic turning point initiated at the end of the 80's. On the other hand, Poland will at last be able to use its geopolitical situation. In the era of global challenges - Poland has no other, rational option.

I would like to devote special attention in my speech to one matter of the urgent importance - the issue of payments for former slave and forced workers. I say these words not only as the Foreign Minister, but also as a former inmate of Auschwitz, and one of those Poles who have always been particularly committed to Polish-German reconciliation - based on recognition of the truth about the past and on faith in a better future, in the interest of both peoples.

I therefore express special satisfaction that finally (or should I say - "at last") the matter is nearing conclusion. The payments that are to be made are not compensation, they cannot nullify the suffering and the crimes. However, for us, who were victims of the criminal Nazi system, they constitute a sign of supreme importance - sign of the victory of morality, justice and reconciliation. I fully share the words of the Prime Minister, addressed to Chancellor Schröder and the German industry. At the same time, as Foreign Minister, I feel duty-bound to note the exceptional consistency and conscientiousness of my colleagues and subordinates at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation and associations of the victims, who conducted extremely hard negotiations for over two years. They were consistently supported by the Prime Minister and members of the government. On this issue the President and representatives of all parties spoke in one voice. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs I should probably refrain from thanking too lavishly all those who contributed to finalizing this matter - because I am one of them - but as a former inmate of Auschwitz and one of the living witnesses of the atrocities and lawlessness, I say - also on behalf of my colleagues - thank you!

Members of the House,

The process of Poland obtaining EU membership is highly complicated. It should be realized here that the accession negotiations - difficult by their very nature - are coinciding with debate on the future shape of the Union. Consequently, the candidate states - which rightly want to participate in the debate - must be aware of their particular European responsibility. Poland is aware of such co-responsibility.

Let me start with some remarks on the accession negotiations; these will be general observations, since detailed matters will be elaborated on by Minister Jan Kułakowski. They have entered the decisive, political phase. The member states - and let me remind you that the negotiations are conducted with the member states - are increasingly expressing their own interests. We have had numerous examples of this recently. The activity of the Polish negotiators should be based on a good reading of the situation and the ability to react quickly and accurately. The Foreign Ministry and its missions will continue to have as their basic tasks the maintenance of working cooperation with partners in Union member states and of a system of early identification of problems. That is understandable. However, as the accession negotiations enter a qualitatively new stage, attention must also be focused on other, important factors:

- progress in the negotiations will increasingly depend on the readiness of the government to make difficult political decisions. Such decisions should receive backing of all political forces represented in parliament, and also of the President, who is co-responsible for foreign policy. Any changes in Polish negotiating positions must be credible both to our partners in the EU, and to the Polish public opinion. Hence, the proposal of the President to establish, as soon as possible, a permanent forum for consultations between the president, government and the opposition deserves full support;

- The role of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the process of negotiations should be enhanced since he is the chairman of the Polish delegation to the Intergovernmental Conference on EU membership negotiations. The more difficult and "political" the substance of the negotiations - the more frequently decisions will be taken at foreign ministers' level. And it is for this basic reason that the Foreign Minister plays a key role in working out the final, compromise solutions in the last stage of negotiations;

- I have underlined that the Polish negotiating positions and any changes in them must be credible. Hence, it is absolutely essential that the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister approve of any statements - particularly of a program character - to be made by Polish negotiators and other representatives of the government administration;

- We must be particularly cautious during negotiations on the most sensitive issues - such as agriculture, structural funds and the budget. Poland should not allow itself to be drawn into the play of the often contradictory interests of the present member states. We should firmly support solutions benefiting the whole - that is the enlarged - European Union.

The second issue I wish to address concerns the debate on the future of the European Union. We must realize that the debate will answer the basic questions pertaining to the future of the Union, of which Poland already will be a member.

For this reason, I wish to strongly emphasize that the candidate states have a moral and political right to co-determine the vision of the future Europe. Poland is actively making use of that right. The President and the Prime Minister have both spoken out on the future of the EU. The Foreign Ministry regularly presents positions on the most important areas under discussion, and they constitute a logical whole:

- at the beginning of last year, my predecessor, Professor Bronisław Geremek, in a letter to the then president of the Council, Jaime Gama, presented Poland's initial position concerning the Intergovernmental Conference 2000;

- that position was then elaborated in a document submitted in mid-June last year (Poland, as the only candidate state, presented such an extensive document on the Conference, which - by the way - was well received by the EU member states);

- on February 22, 2001, we presented a detailed position on the Treaty of Nice;

- on May 11 this year, I made a program address elaborating the Polish attitude on the European Security and Defense Policy, and more recently (on May 28, during a conference at the Warsaw School of Economics - SGH) I presented our position on the key questions concerning the debate on the future of the Union.

We are getting actively involved in the debate itself: on April 23 the Foreign Ministry, in association with the Swedish presidency, organized in Warsaw the first serious discussion between the member states, the candidates and European institutions.

The Polish stand on the future of Europe is pragmatic. Any changes in the architecture of European institutions should be preceded by a precise definition of the goals that the changes are supposed to serve. The European Union must obtain a solid democratic legitimacy for its actions, reinforced by a catalog of common values. We should bear it in mind that the institutional solutions incorporated in the Treaty of Nice - favorable to Poland - are just the means and not the end in itself. The ability to reach compromises and build coalitions with other member states is the basis of effectiveness in European institutions. We must learn this. A great majority of the member states and the European Commission welcomed the declaration made by the Prime Minister in this chamber in December 2000, and its elaboration contained in the document "The Treaty of Nice - the Polish Point of View", expressing Poland's support for strengthening the community method of European integration. A strong, efficient European Commission and a European Parliament with adequate prerogatives will guarantee that the decisions taken by the European institutions reflect the common good of all member states.

I have submitted the above mentioned documents to the parliamentary caucuses, so that they have the full picture of the position and activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The third issue I wish to address concerns the need to define the position on the fundamental issues of integration - such as the so-called Lisbon process, designed to turn Europe into a competitive economic zone, drawing on the development of knowledge and advanced technologies. That also applies to the establishment in Europe of "an area of freedom, security and justice", in line with the conclusions of the Tampere European Council (October 1999). That is the thrust of an important proposal put forward by Prime Minister Buzek, who called for building "a knowledge-based economy" in the 4+4+2 formula. It would be a joint undertaking by the states of the Visegrad Group and four members of the Union - Great Britain, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands (which proposed a similar program), with the participation of the European Commission and the OECD.

Poland is already making its concrete contribution to shaping the eastern policy of the future, enlarged Union. Documents elaborating Poland's position on Kaliningrad, the situation in Belarus, and Ukraine have been conveyed to the European Commission and member states of the EU. We shall shortly convey to the Swedish presidency a document presenting the Polish vision of the European Union's eastern policy.

The general conclusion is that parallel to the progress in the accession negotiations, Poland has been actively participating - and will continue to participate - in the debate on the future shape of the Union and in the European decision-making process.

That is dictated by our historic experience, our geopolitical situation and lies in our interest.

Members of the House,

Security of the state and its citizens figures prominently in any definition of the *raison d'Etat*, and if we do not assign top priority to that question, it is only because - for the first time in our turbulent history - we are protected by the umbrella of the most powerful defensive alliance in the world. After all, we have recognized borders, and neighbors who are - in their large majority - friendly. However, the sensitivity of politicians to possible threats - even if those appear unlikely today - has to be higher than that of other citizens. Without questioning the significance of having efficient and modern armed forces, I believe that the security of the state also depends on such factors as smoothly functioning democratic institutions that are free of corruption, social peace guaranteed by equal access to education and employment, balanced economic growth and effective prevention of environmental disasters and destructive social frustration.

The tasks pertaining to the international security of Poland concern several groups of issues.

First, there is our membership of the North Atlantic Alliance, active involvement in all current activities of the Organization, shaping of its strategy; fulfilment of the commitments of adapting the Polish armed forces to NATO standards, their restructuring and modernization; ensuring optimum participation of Poles in the political and military structures of NATO; maintaining - at the very least - our present involvement in allied crisis-response operations (KFOR and SFOR).

The second group of tasks is connected with the idea of extending the zone of stability and security in Europe. Poland is actively involved in all actions by European and Euro-Atlantic security institutions, designed to enhance economic development and political reforms in the states of eastern and southern Europe, and to prevent new divisions. We wish to deepen collaboration in crisis management with the members of NATO, the European Union and their partners.

We support the "open doors" policy of the Alliance and shall campaign for its enlargement through admission of further states from our region. We intend to continue to support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of our neighbors - Slovakia and Lithuania, and also of Latvia and Estonia, inter alia through deepening of practical cooperation, primarily in the framework of the Membership Action Plan.

The security of our region is also the reason for our involvement in the work of the NATO-Ukraine Commission and the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. Poland persistently attaches great importance to active involvement of Ukraine in allied operations, and to the process of its integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures. In the case of the Russian Federation, we want to be an active participant in the process of formulating the Alliance's policy toward Russia, and to deepen the mutually beneficial dialog and partner-like cooperation concerning issues of security.

A special place in this field is occupied by the issue of Poland's contribution to the development of the European Security and Defense Policy. At its successive meetings, the European Council defined the general goal and parameters of the planned military capacity. It established permanent political and military structures of the European Security and Defense Policy, including the relevant committees and military staff, drafted the general principles of consultations and cooperation with NATO members not belonging to the EU, and formulated the principles and mechanisms of cooperation between the European Union and NATO. At the conference in Brussels, in November 2000, European Union member states and states interested in collaboration with the EU, pledged to contribute troops and equipment needed to attain the target capacity in the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy. It should be pointed out that it will not be concerned with defense matters, which remain vested in NATO, but will be involved in conducting the so-called Petersberg missions. Accordingly, NATO retains its basic importance as the foundation of security in the Euro-Atlantic zone.

Members of the House,

I would like to emphasize strongly, that the Polish position concerning the European Security and Defense Policy was not merely limited to acceptance. It was also active, meaning that we are campaigning to ensure that the proposed principles of cooperation between the Union and non-Union European NATO members and other candidate states provide genuine opportunities for cooperation in the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy. Poland has pledged its contribution to the European military capacity and its readiness to participate in operations in the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy. We are in favor of the formulation of transparent principles of relations between NATO and the EU based on dialog and consultations, so that the development of the European Security and Defense Policy does not lead to divisions in the Alliance, and does not undermine the links between the USA and Europe in the sphere of security. It will be of key significance to introduce a mechanism ensuring coordination between NATO planning forces and the development of the EU operational capacity for conducting Petersberg missions. It is an important task to define the optimum formula for the participation of European NATO members not belonging to the EU in the work of the new structures. It should be based of a regular, joint assessment of the security environment and the perceived threats, a joint review mechanism taking into account preparedness of the armed forces for cooperation and, finally, joint political will, when the need occurs to use those forces. Poland also attaches importance to the possibility of its participation in the consolidation of the European arms industry.

Members of the House,

The problems of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control constitute the next group of issues connected with the broadly perceived security of Poland. We intend to campaign for the ratification and implementation of the Adaptation Agreement of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe; to monitor the observance of the modernized Vienna Document '99. We shall work to increase the effectiveness of the most important control regimes, including full implementation of the Convention banning chemical and biological weapons. Poland's ability to play an active role in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation was demonstrated by the successful conference on the Missile Technology Control Regime, held in Warsaw in mid-May, with the participation of 52 countries.

As active members of the UN and the OSCE we believe that despite their inadequate efficiency at times, the two organizations are making a significant contribution to consolidating the basis of international security. Poland's involvement in their work is widely appreciated and will be continued, including activity in support of the ratification, implementation and verification of agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures. We recognize the high importance of OSCE activity aimed at strengthening the processes of democratization in new states, bolstering their sovereignty, preventing conflicts and respecting human rights. The undeniable recent progress in several countries of South-Eastern Europe as regards strengthening the rule of law and respect of human rights is largely due to the activity of the OSCE, its local missions and specialized institutions. Poland is actively involved in their work.

Members of the House,

The realities of world politics stubbornly remind us that the position of a state, its significance and role is largely determined by the power of its economy, and also the ability to exploit international cooperation for multiplying its successes. Therefore, it is understandable that a high place on the list of foreign policy goals is occupied by economic tasks, including gaining new partners, creating conditions for growth of exports, improvement of the trade structure and reduction of the trade deficit, particularly in relations with the European Union.

The global "new economy", in which we must become involved as soon as possible, requires new regulations concerning world trade. That is a task for the World Trade Organization, including Poland as its member. And it is not an easy task, as proved by the failure of the ministerial conference (Seattle) that was supposed to initiate the so-called millenium round. We are participating in painstaking negotiations, which - we hope - will lead to another round of multilateral trade negotiations. Poland is of the opinion that the launching, conducting and conclusion of the negotiations should constitute parts of a single undertaking, with its results accepted in their totality and applied by all WTO member states. We use our presence in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development to upgrade our economy, which is exceptionally important in the process of our integration with the economic system of the EU. Recognizing the role of information technologies in the development of the "new economy", we supported the Singapore declaration concerning trade in information technology products.

Members of the House,

Among the most important partners of Poland, we traditionally mention the United States first - as the state that recognizes Poland as an essential partner and is receptive to Polish regional concepts. The forthcoming visit to Warsaw by President George W. Bush constitutes a significant signal that he treats Poland as an important Central European state. The close relations with the United States are one of the strongest assets of our foreign policy; that is connected not only with the power of that state, but also with the ideals it espouses. We consistently support the active political and military presence of the United States in Europe, convinced that being close to America does not have to mean moving away from Europe. Poland will strive for the development of bilateral military relations and greater involvement of the USA in Central and Eastern Europe. A good example of this is the implementation by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation of the Kirkland Scholarship Program for states of Eastern Europe. We shall also seek to boost the presence of Polish producers on the American market and to maintain the high level of

American investments in Poland. I also wish to inform you that, as a result of involvement by the Foreign Ministry, a very promising research program has been launched in the American archives, designed to establish the actual contribution of the Home Army into the allied victory over Nazi Germany. The initial results of the project indicate that it was a well-founded initiative.

Germany remains a particularly important European partner of Poland. It is in the interest of both states to strengthen their political partnership and to competently react to current challenges. In several days we shall be marking the tenth anniversary of the Treaty on good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation. It is an occasion to reflect on the great achievements and also on the future nature of contacts with our western neighbor. After closing important chapters of our common history, such as the ending of negotiations on benefits for forced workers of the Third Reich, the time has come to define a new Polish-German community of interests. The building of Polish-German ties, commensurate with the need of European integration will be served by continued cross-border cooperation, as well as more intensive contacts in the sphere of culture and arts, also at self-government level.

As far as the relations with France are concerned, the most important task will consist in maintaining the high level of political dialog, both with regard to bilateral cooperation and European issues. The emphasis in the economic sphere will be on boosting trade, and especially - Polish exports. In this context, it will be important to intensify contacts between French regions and Polish provinces. We need new initiatives enhancing social, cultural, scientific and other contacts.

Attaching high significance to the cooperation of Poland, France and Germany in the framework of the Weimar Triangle, we shall support inter-parliamentary and inter-ministry contacts, as well as regional initiatives. The Triangle also serves as a forum for discussion on the future of Europe.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a very important partner of Poland both in bilateral relations, and in the process of Poland's integration with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The development of relations is stimulated by a convergence of views on the key international issues.

Political dialog, economic cooperation and cultural exchanges with Italy remain consistently significant to Poland. We trust that that country will continue to support the process of European integration. We shall remain very active in all areas of cooperation with Spain. The intensity of political contacts and cooperation with Portugal, Ireland, Austria, Greece and Turkey is motivated by the need to maintain a durable basis and constant development of our relations with those countries.

The Benelux countries are important partners of Poland both in bilateral relations, and in NATO, the process of our integration with the EU, and in new forms of regional collaboration, such as the cooperation of the Visegrad Group with the Benelux. The relations with Belgium in the second half of the year will be marked by that country's presidency of the Union. We shall develop our relations with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, relying on the already tested mechanisms of cooperation, including the Utrecht Conference.

We shall deepen our vigorously developing relations with the Nordic states, focusing on collaboration aimed at ensuring successful and efficient European integration and the development of the so-called Northern Dimension of the EU, as well as the dialog on security and development of regional cooperation in the framework of the Council of Baltic Sea States. We intend to intensify cooperation with Latvia and Estonia. We welcome the dynamic development of the infrastructure of our relations with the Republic of Lithuania, described by both sides as a strategic partnership.

We wish to maintain our traditionally close and cordial relations with the Holy See. The collaboration of the Polish and Vatican diplomacy will be useful, particularly in solving regional conflicts and in building a new worldwide social and moral order. The ecumenical activity of the Holy Father, John Paul II, is a valuable inspiration for us in patiently seeking agreement and dialog even with the most difficult partners.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been particularly committed to nurturing relations with the Jewish diaspora from Poland - and not only from Poland, mainly in the United States, Canada, France and some of the Scandinavian countries. The work of the Bureau for Contacts with the Diaspora - which I established in 1995, and which is directly subordinated to the Minister of Foreign Affairs - has fruitfully served the building and deepening of our dialog on many issues of vital importance to us, some with international repercussions.

Members of the House,

Our eastern policy has long aroused emotions in our parliament and a lively interest of the media. Even though I say "eastern policy", it is not some separate policy, but an integral part of the cohesive whole of our foreign policy, closely connected to its other components. In implementing it, we strive to turn our links with the West into an asset for building new, partner-like relations with the East, and to turn good relations with the East into our contribution to the integration of the European continent.

Poland, to the best of its ability, is trying to support the transformations in Ukraine. We realize that foreign assistance can only have supplementary significance in the process of reforms, which require time, and - most of all - strong political will of the elite and social support. But that potentially rich state, with a population of over fifty million, can well become a true strategic partner of Poland in the East. Our policy vis-a-vis Ukraine, from the moment we recognized its independence, was designed to make maximum use of the opportunity that history created for our states, by supporting and strengthening its independence, and creating links based on reconciliation, partnership, and mutually beneficial cooperation. I do not claim that we have fully realized those intentions. However, ten years is very little in the history of independence, so we should not be surprised by the scale of problems facing our Ukrainian neighbors. Mindful of the importance of Ukraine, not only because it is a neighbour of Poland, we are seeking the greatest possible involvement of the US and the European Union in supporting Ukraine's European option.

Our eastern policy has experienced difficulties primarily with Belarus, a country situated in the heart of the continent, which under the rule of President Lukashenka is sinking into self-isolation and drifting to the political periphery of Europe. In our relations with Belarus, the Polish policy is based on the assumption that independence of that country is in the interest of Poland. The level of bilateral political dialog is restricted, though that does not

apply to many other areas of cooperation. We remain convinced as to the need for an active policy addressed both to the authorities and the people of Belarus.

The development of our relations with Russia over the past ten years has possibly been the most interesting. Without elaborating on the well-known circumstances of those relations, I wish to stress that the restoration of contacts at the top level has created an opportunity for implementation of the suggestions repeatedly tabled in this chamber.

We shall spare no effort to ensure that the invigoration of the political dialog - manifested over the last ten months by important statements and discussions, as well as obvious acts of good will on both sides - is translated into cooperation in effectively addressing common economic problems, a list of which we presented to Prime Minister Kasyanov. The outcome of our endeavors largely depends - as before - on Russia. In the new phase of relations with Russia we intend to effectively protect and promote our national and state interests, at the same time pointing to areas where both sides can derive benefits.

The countries of Central Asia and southern Caucasus - though geographically distant - are partners with future potential. The center of Euro-Asia is gaining significance in world politics. It is in our national interest to try tapping the economic potential of those countries - at present chiefly limited to raw materials.

Polish policy in Central and Eastern Europe is largely based on the conviction that this should be a region of stability and security, with Poland making a concrete contribution to that objective. Our regional policy, successfully conducted for ten years, is based on the development of good-neighbourly relations with states bordering on Poland, and active involvement in different forms of cooperation, such as the Visegrad Group, which Poland has chaired during the past year, CEFTA and the Visegrad Fund, which jointly provide a platform for development of the regional identity of the member states and their closer ties - something, that has been welcomed by the European Union. We enhance our role in the region not only by participating in multilateral groupings, but also by developing meaningful bilateral cooperation with our partners in the Visegrad Group - the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, and with other states of the region, including Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Croatia.

Members of the House,

The government of Poland invariably attaches high significance to our relations with the United Nations and its international activities. Poland intends to be actively involved in the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration, and - let me strongly emphasize - to use the UN as an important instrument of practical implementation of our goals in international politics. We should do everything possible to restore the vital significance of the United Nations in our multilateral diplomacy and to upgrade the effectiveness of our participation in its various forms of activity. In this way, using our involvement in UN actions and programs, we shall be able to upgrade the image of our country - especially among the developing countries - as a responsible and valued partner, sensitive to the problems of others.

Poland wishes to participate in solving global problems through its involvement in the UN, OSCE, OECD, WTO and the Council of Europe. We intend to gradually increase our contribution to multilateral development assistance programs and to provide such assistance - to the best of our ability - through our own system of aid. We are in favor of

supporting the economic growth of the least developed countries, i.a. by granting them unrestricted, tariff-free access to the markets of developed countries, including Poland. Development assistance should also be a component of our active policy supporting human rights. We must not restrict ourselves here to declarations and expressions of indignation or condemnation, but should make a financial contribution to technical and consultative aid programs.

We shall actively strive to maintain our present involvement in UN peace missions. Poland shall also campaign for a reform of the Security Council, designed to make it more representative, credible and transparent, without undermining its ability to carry out its UN Charter tasks in maintaining international peace and security. One should note here the involvement of Poland in the Balkans, where we intend to continue backing the process of democratic transformations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to participate in military, police and civilian peace missions in the region, in accordance with UN resolutions and regional agreements, and to consistently contribute to the implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. We intend to focus on combating organized crime and drugs trafficking.

The participation of Poland in bilateral and multilateral undertakings in South-Eastern Europe designed to ensure full stability in the area is not only a consequence of our commitments as a NATO ally and member of international organizations.

The strengthening of democracy, economic development and shaping of a secure international environment is in the vital interest of Poland.

We are examining the possibility of joining further Council of Europe conventions, treating that as another factor enhancing the process of our integration with the European Union. We shall become involved in actions by the Council of Europe aimed at building democracy on the continent, respecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law and establishing civil societies.

Members of the House,

Our diplomacy concentrates on the Northern Hemisphere, but we are not losing sight of the historic changes and imposing potential of the vast areas of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing on the magnificent achievements of the cradles of civilization once flourishing there, the non-European countries have made a leap in their development in recent decades, in some cases joining the world leaders.

The region of Asia and the Pacific remains one of the most active regions of the world economy, with the greatest future potential. The growing investment links with Asia are just one reason why the economic situation there cannot be indifferent to us. Continuing, at various levels, our political dialog with the main partners in the region, we are chiefly concerned with economic issues. Unfortunately, Asian countries account for one-quarter of Poland's total trade deficit. The government is applying various measures, including credits, to change the situation by boosting Polish exports.

Even though Latin America is geographically distant, we have many links with the societies of that continent. We note their energy and the strong integration tendencies in the region. We also remember the contribution that Polonia (Polish community abroad - translators

note) has made to the development of the societies on the continent. Those are the foundations for the development of varied, partner-like relations with the countries of Latin America.

The region of Africa and the Middle East can become an important export market for our goods and services and a prospective oil supplier. We shall develop political dialog with our leading economic partners in the area, and shall try to interest the most advanced countries of the so-called South in the transformation of the Polish economy and in greater capital investments in our country. We see realistic possibilities of boosting our exports, particularly to countries with which we have traditional, mutually beneficial cooperation.

We are concerned that the prospects for lasting peace in the Middle East are still negligible, despite international efforts. Still, we shall continue to actively develop political and economic relations with partners in the Middle East, both Israel - with whose society we have special historic ties, and with its neighbors, the Arab states. We shall continue to conduct an even-handed policy toward both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We consistently support dialog between the Jews and the Palestinians. We reject the methods of terror and violence in solving political, national or religious conflicts. We want to contribute to durable and just peace in the region, i.a. through participation in UN peace missions.

This forum has repeatedly heard that the Polonia and Polish expatriates occupy a prominent place not only in the hearts of our citizens, but also in the foreign policy of the Polish government. Hence, our striving to upgrade the partner-like cooperation with Polonia communities. The recent II Congress of Polonia was an important event in the life of the Polonia and Poland. We are carefully analyzing the resolutions of that Congress.

We hope that the tenth anniversary of restoration of diplomatic relations with Lithuania - to be marked in September - will be an occasion to settle all problems in bilateral relations, and, in particular, to ensure the rights of the Polish minority, as laid down in the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty. In the East, it will be our goal to maintain and develop Polish-language training in areas with high density of Polish population, and to extend the system of Polish Government scholarships to cover youth of Polish descent studying in their countries of residence.

As concerns the German Polonia, it will be an important task to obtain support of the Federal Republic's authorities for the cultural and educational activity of the Polonia communities, to extend the scope of that activity, and to further stimulate the integration of those communities with German society. We shall also try to help the Polish national group in Austria to obtain the status of a nationality group.

We shall support the campaign of the Polish citizens of the Russian Federation for recognition of Poles as a people subject to repression by Stalin's regime, in accordance with the provisions of the Russian law "On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples".

We are planning to open negotiations this year on a Polish-Lithuanian agreement on the protection of graves and memorials to the victims of wars and political repression, and to accelerate work on a similar agreement with Kazakhstan.

We shall continue our endeavors to bring about conclusion of the reconstruction of the Cemetery of the Lvov Eaglets.

We shall intensify work on adjusting the rules on the movement of persons to the standards of the European Union. This will involve the introduction of visas for the citizens of many countries situated on the territory of the former USSR, necessitating considerable expansion of the consular infrastructure and introduction of an appropriate system of communications between the headquarters and the missions. That will require granting the Foreign Ministry appropriate financial resources.

As concerns the area of treaties, I welcome the successful efforts of the government to bring about faster ratification of international agreements signed by Poland. At present, for the first time in many years, we do not have any delays in this sphere.

I wish to stress that this also goes to the credit of this Parliament.

Members of the House,

Nearing the conclusion of this address, I wish to emphasize that successful implementation of the tasks I have mentioned largely depends on a proper shaping of the international image of Poland.

The Polish cultural diplomacy - fundamentally reorganized over the last two years - has an enormous role to play in this respect. Thanks to it we can make better use of one of our greatest assets - culture. That was demonstrated by the success - widely noted in Germany - of the Polish exhibition at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt, in October 2000, and the equally successful Polish exposition at the EXPO in Hanover. We are also doing everything to ensure the success of the Polish Year being organized in Austria, and the participation of Poland in the Europalia 2001 festival in Belgium. The promotions involved are designed, i.a. to support our accession negotiations with the EU - and the whole integration process in general. We shall also seek to promote Poland in countries that are negotiating their future EU membership. We already have certain achievements here, through the Framework Program of Foreign Promotion of Poland's Accession to the EU, adopted on June 22, 2000, is only gaining momentum. The promotion and dissemination of objective information, influencing the perception of Poland by the elite and opinion-makers abroad - those are tasks not only for professionals, but also for all citizens. They will determine if we manage to overcome the occasional negative stereotypes about us and to gain sympathy abroad.

Members of the House,

Let me begin my closing remarks. Demonstrating credibility is a fundamental task for a state that is building democracy, strengthening its market economy and entering efficient international structures. Poland has no reason to be ashamed of its past: we have always fulfilled our obligations as an ally, making the sacrifice of blood - whenever that was required. Poland is an equally credible, predictable ally and partner today. The agreement of all significant political forces on issues of strategic importance to the foreign policy of Poland - as I have pointed out in the beginning of this speech - has crucially contributed to this. I feel that this special achievement, worked out during the first ten years of independent Poland, should be a subject of exceptional care. As Foreign Minister, I have tried to make my own modest contribution to this cause.

And another reflection. In the final, difficult phase of the accession negotiations, let us not lose sight of the fundamental sense of the process of integration, which - since its very beginning - was a grand political project, designed to guarantee lasting peace in Europe. That project is only gaining its full dimension as a result of the transformations in our region at the turn of the 80ies and the forthcoming enlargement. The candidate states are extending the common market and the zone of stability, enriching the area of integration with their diverse cultures, and are adding new momentum to that process. That is our great chance! It is aptly conveyed by the words of Heinrich Heine, addressed to Poles 180 years ago, at a time when a sovereign Polish state did not exist: "... since nations that have diligently toiled on the construction of the tower of Babylon, known as European culture, now feel exhausted, our new arrivals will carry on the cause with Slavonic dexterity and unceasing energy. Perhaps this nation is still destined to perform feats that the genius of humanity prizes above victorious battles, knightly rattling of sabers and the charge of horses in the national past."

May this happen!

Mister President, Mister Speaker, Mister Prime Minister, Members of the House!

Thank you for your attention.

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