

Government information on the Polish foreign policy in the year 2004,
presented at the session of the Sejm on January 21, 2004
by
the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland,
Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz

Mr. President! Mr. Speaker! Mr. Prime Minister! Honorable Members!

I have the honor to present to the Honorable Members the information on the directions and objectives of the Polish foreign policy in the year 2004. However, let me begin with a brief remark concerning the last year.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had the opportunity to realize how important for the efficient implementation of the tasks of the Polish foreign policy is a by-partisan consensus regarding its priorities and the support for the activities of the Government on the international arena, repeatedly expressed by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.

While standing here I would like to thank the Honorable Members for all the support that the Polish diplomacy was granted in the year 2003. I hope that we can count on this also during the present year.

Honorable Members!

There is no doubt that the international security environment has been undergoing dynamic changes over the recent years. It is frequently difficult to predict them, and they often have very far-reaching consequences.

Last year, when we were implementing our foreign policy, we were striving to combine the dedication to the premises of the Polish foreign policy which had been adopted by the Government and approved of by the Honorable Members with the flexibility of reaction to the challenges stemming from the development of the international situation. We will continue this approach.

The main factors determining the directions of the Polish foreign policy in the year 2004 are: the Polish accession to the European Union, the evolution and tensions in the transatlantic relations, as well as our political and military commitment to the stabilization of Iraq.

The threats to the international security connected to global terrorism and the possibility of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are also of considerable importance.

New opportunities are opening before our foreign policy. They are connected, on the one hand, with our accession to the European Union, and on the other, with our close relations with the United States. At the same time we face new strategic choices. We must answer several fundamental questions: what is our place and role in the changing Europe and what would we like them to be? What should the transatlantic relations in the context of global threats look like? What are the tasks of NATO? What should be the relationship between NATO and the European Union at present and in the near future? There are even more similar questions.

The active transcending of our political activity beyond Europe, as reflected by our involvement in Iraq, lends a new dimension to our policy and forces us to adopt a new perspective when looking at the issues of global security.

Therefore, we face a need to acknowledge in our thinking the new circumstances and dynamic development of the international situation.

Honorable Members!

April 16, 2003 - the day of signing the Accession Treaty - was the most important date last year in European politics, a date that will have a permanent place in Polish history textbooks. The successful outcome of the June accession referendum has confirmed that we were right in our choice.

When preparing for the assumption of our membership obligations Poland actively joined in the debate on the future shape of Europe. The negotiations on the European constitution in the framework of the Intergovernmental Conference were not easy.

We transparently presented our priorities. They concerned: the acknowledgement of Christian traditions in the preamble of the constitution, a group model of presidency, exclusion of defense solutions that could weaken the role of NATO, the reflection of the full representation of member states in the composition of the Commission and the retention of the system of vote-weighting in the European Council adopted in the Treaty of Nice.

We consistently defended our position. Thanks to a constructive dialog with our partners it was possible to reach common position on numerous issues. We failed to reach agreement among others on the issues of the vote-weighting system in the European Union Council and the preamble.

I would like to clearly reiterate here, that when we presented our position on the voting model in the Union, we were not motivated by narrow, particular interests.

We believe that the European Union can and should be based on the principles of coherence and solidarity in its activities. This will allow to take into account the interests of all states, regardless of their demographic or economic potential. We are confident that the ongoing process of reflection in European capitals will facilitate reaching compromise that reflects all views.

Poland wants the Union to be a strong, efficient and effective structure. In order to achieve this, it needs decision-making procedures encouraging compromise, instead of forcing decisions.

A certain dose of idealism is also needed, without which no great international project has even been completed. We need open and honest talks. Poland is ready to participate in such talks.

Honorable Members!

It will be the primary task of our country as a new member of the Union to define her position on crucial issues of the Union's development. This concerns in particular the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, structural and cohesion policies, the EU budget for the years 2007-2013, as well as the Lisbon Strategy and the Initiative for Growth. The budget discussion - which is just beginning within the European Union - will be a particularly serious challenge.

Seeking the common good will be the main principle of the Polish policy in the Union.

Our national interest will always be the departure point to define the Polish position. We will seek to reconcile it with the European interest. There are no fundamental contradictions between the Polish national interest and the European interest. However, there are and there will be divergent positions of member states resulting from different definitions of their national interests and constraints due to budget capabilities.

We realize that greater effectiveness and efficiency of the Union mechanisms requires deeper integration. We are and will be its proponents.

Poland treats very seriously the discussion on the future of Europe. We are aware of our rights and the responsibility that we have been entrusted with. We listen attentively to the voices of our partners, but at the same time we are capable of presenting our own position and defending our views like other states of the Union. This might be the reason why we are not an easy partner in the Union. However, we will certainly be an honest and responsible partner. We will be ourselves.

Honorable Members!

Our membership of this structure will determine a new framework for our bilateral relations with the EU member states. Priority will be attached to rebuilding the climate of special trust in our relations with Germany and France, with which we have recently differed on several issues. Differences of opinion in the European family are nothing extraordinary, since they stem from understandable differences in historical experience, geographic location and conditions of development.

Such differences initially divided the member states, such as France and Germany, on many occasions - for example regarding the Common Agricultural Policy. The divergences motivated them to seek compromise, facilitating the elaboration of a common position.

We believe that the Weimar Triangle could become a mechanism enhancing better understanding of mutual expectations and contributing to building mutual confidence. The Wrocław Summit of Poland, Germany and France and the recent consultations of the Foreign Ministers of the Weimar Triangle in Berlin were promising in this respect.

We wish to maintain the high momentum of political contacts with France and Germany. We see much room for cooperation on the issues of Eastern policy, the common foreign as well as defense policy.

Germany is Poland's leading trade partner, while France is the main foreign investor in Poland. That is yet another reason for building enhanced partnership.

Our accession to the Union will determine our future relations with Germany. It is our joint duty to prevent Polish-German relations from being burdened with the problems of the past. The Gdańsk declaration of the two Presidents, issued in October 2003, is an example of a constructive approach to solving such problems. We would like to create new initiatives in Polish-German relations, initiatives conducive to bringing the two societies even closer together.

We also wish to develop close contacts with other key partners in the European Union.

We perceive good prospects for tight cooperation between Poland and Great Britain.

We perceive a similarity of positions of the two countries on the issues of European and international policy, such as the role and place of NATO and the European security and defense policy in the European security architecture. We are linked by the willingness to develop transatlantic relations and the awareness of the role that the enlarged EU should play to the East of Poland.

Close cooperation between Poland and Spain in the enlarged EU may find a good basis in the strategic partnership established during the Intergovernmental Conference, and consolidated through the process of stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, as well as the initiation of the practice of intergovernmental consultations.

In our relations with Italy, we wish to take advantage of that country's interest in developing cooperation within a broadly-conceived Central Europe and in the relations with Eastern Europe.

In the case of both Spain and Italy, one of the objectives of our policy will be to improve the trade balance and attract more investments of these states in Poland.

In the year 2004, we will focus in particular on contacts with Ireland and the Netherlands, because of their respective presidencies of the European Council.

Mr. Speaker! Honorable Members!

Poland intends to become actively involved in shaping the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. It is our goal to enhance the identity of the Union as a key international player with a global dimension. We view the common policy in terms of opportunity, rather than constraint.

It may offer us the possibility of a more effective impact on the Union's external activities, particularly in Eastern Europe. For that to happen, we must be able to submit to our Union partners accurate and persuasive ideas, and strive to build political consensus around them.

Our primary objective in the framework of the Union's common foreign policy will consist in strengthening and invigorating the EU cooperation with its neighbors, in particular the Eastern ones, through the establishment of the Eastern Dimension of the EU policy.

The relevant proposals that we have put forward over the last few months have animated the Union debates on the subject. We will continue our involvement in the work on the EU initiative "Wider Europe - New Neighborhood". We will promote clear differentiation of the neighborhood policy towards the respective partners all through the further development of this concept.

The Eastern Dimension of the EU policy could evolve into a mechanism coordinating the manifold forms and instruments of the Union's activities. It can also serve as a platform for regional cooperation in certain areas. We believe that the Union should have a coherent concept of regional cooperation in Eastern Europe, which would complement bilateral programs, and - what is most important - consolidate stability in this area.

Our overall objective as concerns our Eastern neighbors remains unchanged - supporting democratic and free-market reforms, building the rule of law, strengthening independence, rapprochement and integration with Western structures.

Members of the Sejm!

We welcome the development of various forms of cooperation of the European Union and NATO with Russia. We are confident that Russia will be persuaded as to the benefits of EU enlargement, also for itself. One of these benefits will automatically concern the extension of the provisions of the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the EU and Russia to the new member states. It is very important for Poland to ensure that our businesses enjoy the same opportunities that the Russian market offers to their EU counterparts.

We will strive to participate in all forms of the EU partnership with Russia, including the energy dialog. The good climate in Polish-Russian bilateral political contacts must be translated into economic relations, which are still marred by negative trade balance.

We also need progress in solving difficult problems, including those connected with the historical legacy of our bilateral relations.

Poland was and will be a spokesman for the integration of Ukraine with NATO and the European Union. It is obvious that consolidation of democracy and economic reform in that country will enhance the response of our partners to Poland's endorsement of that country. Kiev's pro-Western choice should find an unambiguous confirmation in facts. As an EU member, Poland will campaign for the quickest possible presentation to Ukraine of its clear European prospects, including the possibility of membership.

Our policy towards Belarus will be guided by the objective of consolidating its independence and sovereignty in international relations, as well as supporting the structures of civic society. To attain these goals, we will try to make broader use of the possibilities inherent in the partnership programs of NATO and the European Union.

Poland's voice in the framework of the Common Foreign Policy will not be one-dimensional and limited exclusively to the Eastern Dimension. We will actively contribute to shaping the EU policy towards all non-European regions, and with regard to crucial global issues.

Members of the Sejm!

The logic of European integration makes cooperation in the framework of security and defense unavoidable. The Union, as a global actor, must have at its disposal an appropriate set of instruments, including military ones. Poland will join in all undertakings and forms of cooperation that will not weaken the North Atlantic Alliance and duplicate its functions. We intend to join the European Defense Agency and permanent structural cooperation, after it has been sanctioned by the Treaty establishing the European Constitution.

Our membership of the European Union has manifold implications. They concern among others the necessity to adjust the legal basis of our relations. This is a crucial though hardly spectacular aspect of our policy. We are currently in the course of the denunciation or re-negotiation of a total of 149 international agreements subject to adjustment to the EU requirements, and the accession - through signing of relevant protocols - to 36 mixed agreements concluded by the European Communities and their member states.

Our consular services are also facing new tasks. We will continue our activities aimed at harmonizing Polish visa procedures with EU requirements, and unifying our consular practices with the EU standards, through i.a. implementation of the common consular instruction of the EU. Ongoing monitoring and upgrading of visa procedures applied to Belarus, Ukraine and Russia will remain a constant task.

Mr. Speaker! Honorable Members!

The Polish-American relations have recently attained unprecedented stature. One of the reasons for this has been the Polish position during the Iraqi crisis. This new quality in our relations has had positive political consequences. It is a source of our enhanced prestige, also among our European partners. The joint service of the Polish and American soldiers in Iraq is consolidating our partnership.

In the year 2004 we will undertake measures with view of maintaining the present level of political cooperation. We hope that it will be conducive to developing economic cooperation, including the new phase of American direct investments in Poland, among others thanks to the implementation of the off-set agreements connected with the purchase of the F-16 aircraft. Good climate in the Polish-American relations should also result in the more active presence of the Polish enterprises on the American market.

We will do our best to facilitate travel of Polish citizens to the United States. I know that this issue is a matter of concern for the Members of the Sejm and that it is attracting intense interest of the Polish public opinion. I would like to take this opportunity and inform you that we have held talks on this issue for several months, not only at the working level, but also at the highest political level. We intend to consistently present our position to our American partners and jointly seek solutions to problems affecting the Poles who wish to travel to that country.

The Iraqi crisis exposed serious divergences between the USA and some key European states. Differences of opinion in the transatlantic community are a fact and we do not intend to underestimate them. Still, they are of secondary importance when one considers the durable and solid community of values and interests bonding America and Europe. Therefore, there is no dilemma of having to choose between America and Europe. However, it is imperative for Poland to contribute to the consolidation of the transatlantic partnership. It should help us confront joint challenges and threats of the contemporary world.

This concerns in particular the fight with terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and organized crime, settlement of regional crises, promotion of democratic values and human rights, market economy, addressing problems of globalization. Poland will support the partner-like dialog and champion positive climate of transatlantic cooperation. We also have in mind the important place of Canada in the Atlantic partnership.

Honorable Members!

NATO remains the fundamental platform of transatlantic cooperation. The North Atlantic Alliance guarantees our country's security. The consolidation of its coherence and significance remains the primary objective of our policy.

Over the recent years NATO has been undergoing the process of profound transformation. The Organization has taken on a responsible role in Afghanistan; the NATO Headquarters have also granted support to the Polish activities in Iraq, where NATO could play an even more prominent role. NATO is becoming an institution capable of a selective fulfillment of its tasks even in distant corners of the world. We support this trend.

We support the concept according to which NATO must focus its attention on areas where the threats to the Euro-Atlantic zone originate. It is a blessing of the moment that there is no serious risk of armed conflict in Europe. Even though the sources of threat are outside Europe, if they are not effectively contained, they could directly threaten the countries of our continent. Hence, it is indispensable to use NATO on the areas beyond Europe. This consolidates the role of the organization as a valuable instrument from the point of view of the security interests of its member states.

The allies, including Poland, should develop their defense capabilities with a view to fulfilling new tasks. However, this does not imply forgetting the classic role of NATO as an instrument of collective defense. This does not also mean forgetting the necessity of a meticulous monitoring of traditional threats.

We will take part in the implementation of initiatives designed to raise the military capabilities of the Alliance, such as the Prague Capabilities Commitment, NATO Response Force, the initiative of defense against weapons of mass destruction. We will monitor the process of reforms of the NATO command structure and support the idea of establishing a NATO Allied Forces Training Center in Poland.

The United States has recently announced a review of the deployment of its troops in Europe. This is justified by the changes in the international security environment. Poland shares this reasoning. We are confident that the decisions that are made will be met with full understanding among our allies and partners. The relevant consultations are under way.

The enlargement of the Alliance is part of the construction of its new identity. We are gratified that the present stage of enlargement is progressing smoothly. The door to NATO should remain open. We refer here, in particular, to the aspirations of Ukraine.

Credit should be given for the Ukrainian reforms in the area of security and defense, as well as for its contribution to the stabilization of Iraq. We expect that this year's NATO Summit in Istanbul will give a strong impetus to the further rapprochement between Ukraine and NATO. We also hope that the pragmatic cooperation between NATO and Russia will be further developed, enhanced by a change in the perception of NATO by the Russians.

The changing circumstances in which the Alliance operates, the evolving nature of the threats and expectations, all point to a need of deeper reflection on security threats and challenges, the role of NATO in global and Euro-Atlantic security, the tasks of NATO, and especially the principles of cooperation with the European Union and other international organizations. Such reflection could result in elaborating a coherent vision of the Alliance for the next few decades.

It could also serve as a means of rebuilding confidence in the transatlantic community, strained by disputes over Iraq. The Istanbul Summit could provide stimulus for such deepened reflection.

Members of the Sejm!

Poland bears significant burden in connection with her involvement in military operations conducted under the aegis of NATO, the UN, the European Union and the coalition of states. The Iraqi operation has priority, though we are not conducting it to the prejudice of other obligations. Poland will retain her commitment to the so-far NATO crisis-response operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and to the international police operations in South-Eastern Europe.

The hotbeds of conflicts that have existed for years have not disappeared from the Euro-Atlantic area. They include Transdnestrria, Caucasus and Transcaucasia. We hope for progress in their resolution. An important instrument in regulating them and preventing new ones from occurring is the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. However, its identity requires redefinition in the new European realities.

Honorable Members!

The year 2004 will bring increased responsibilities for Poland in the sphere of regional policy. In June we assume the annual Chairmanship of the Council of Baltic Sea States, in July - Chairmanship of the Visegrad Group, and November will mark the beginning of the Polish tenure as the Chairman of the Council of Europe. We will also be taking part in the work of the so-called "Troika" of the Central European Initiative.

There appears an urgent need for a deepened reflection on the role of these organizations in the new European realities and for a redefinition of their goals and tasks. This applies in particular to the Visegrad Group, which will become an internal grouping of the European Union.

We would like to see a consolidation of our region's identity in the enlarged Union, and the Visegrad Group - despite the obvious shortcomings in its cooperation demonstrated yet again late last year - could play a useful role in this.

Therefore, we are in favor of the concept of reviving the message of the Group in the new circumstances, based on a realistic assessment of expectations and possibilities. We attach considerable importance to working together with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in lobbying for common interests in the Union, and in developing regional cooperation - particularly in the area of infrastructure, movement of persons and culture. We would like to see the principle of open borders implemented within the Group.

Referring to our Central European neighbors, we should take note of this year's 10th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship with Lithuania, which will provide an opportunity to review the principles and the obligations it comprises.

We will treat the Council of Baltic Sea States as an instrument of economic and social integration with Scandinavian partners and Baltic states, and of intensified cooperation with Russia, in particular with the Kaliningrad Region.

We will make use of our Chairmanship of the Council of Europe to enhance the image of this organization as the creator and guarantor of unified legal foundations in the field of observance of the triad of European values - democracy, human rights and rule of law, and also as an instrument of dialog between cultures and civilizations. We hope that Poland will be entrusted with the honorable task of organizing the third Council of Europe Summit in spring 2005.

As a member of the "Troika" of the Central European Initiative, Poland will cooperate in shaping a new role of the grouping - also with reference to the EU concept of a Wider Europe. One of the key challenges for the initiative is to prevent the emergence of divisions after the enlargement of the European Union. It is of paramount importance to maintain close ties with the states that will remain outside the Western structures and to keep alive the prospects of their integration, in accordance with the provisions of the Riga Initiative launched by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Poland will support in particular the integration of Bulgaria and Romania, as well as Croatia with the European Union and NATO. It will also support the aspirations of the other states of South-Eastern Europe in this respect. Furthermore, we intend to be actively involved in the undertakings of the Stability Pact for that region.

Honorable Members!

Over the last several months, world politics has focused on the Iraqi issue. It has brought home the awareness that international security is becoming more and more indivisible. Poland lent her support to the military operation against Saddam Hussein. We did so in the name of allied solidarity and for moral reasons. The operation was justified. New facts are constantly emerging, revealing the enormity of the crimes committed by the former Iraqi regime against his own people. The removal of the

dictator was a blessing for Iraq's neighbors, the region and the entire international community.

Poland has been invited to take part in the stabilization effort. We were assigned the command of one of the sectors. This is a clear evidence of trust and appreciation which strengthened our country's international standing. The process of stabilization progresses, though not without complications. It has unfortunately come at a price of painful sacrifices. Polish blood has also been spilled for the Iraqi cause. This does not diminish our determination.

The Polish presence in Iraq has one goal: helping the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their own future, to build the rule of law, to establish order and security. We have no other intentions. The prospects of transferring responsibility to the local authorities have been set. Poland is highly interested in achieving this goal smoothly. The success of this process is in the interest of all, including the states that had harbored reservations or criticism towards the operation in Iraq. Chaos in Iraq would have extremely adverse impact on the region and the world.

Honorable Members!

The Iraqi issue makes us aware of the complexity of challenges facing the international community in its striving for world security and stability. Today Iraq has also become a battlefield against international terrorism. Terrorism, though it does not directly threaten the territory of Poland, strikes at the foundations of civilization and social order. We will continue our engagement in the anti-terrorist coalition with full conviction.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become another important challenge. Poland commits to the relevant undertakings in this field, including those in the framework of the Proliferation Security Initiative, announced by President Bush last June in Cracow.

In the year 2003 Poland was elected to a two-year term on the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency which is the primary forum for international endeavors against proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has a special role to play in connection with the situation around Iran's nuclear program. We also trust that progress will be achieved - in the framework of the six-party negotiations - in resolving the crisis connected with the policies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Honorable Members!

Membership of the European Union will confront Poland with new tasks as concerns solving non-European problems. The Union, as I have already mentioned, is a global political player. Its security strategy, adopted last December, is based on the

assumption that lasting security of Europe cannot be built without ensuring stability in the European neighborhood and active engagement in solving global threats.

Numerous hotbeds still exist in various parts of the world. Poland must be ready to participate in dealing with them. Unfortunately, Iraq is not an exceptional case. We have participated in many peace-keeping operations. That is one of our assets in discussions on global problems held in the framework of the United Nations.

This organization also requires deeper reflection and systemic adjustment to the realities of the contemporary world. That conviction was behind our initiative to hold a debate on a New Political Act for the UN. Despite a lot of skepticism in the first reactions to this project, the evolution of the international situation has validated our diagnosis. We are extremely gratified that the UN Secretary General has been receptive to the idea and has convened a High-Level Panel of Eminent Personalities. The Panel will analyze the challenges and threats to world security, and propose conceptual and institutional solutions. We render our full support to the work of the Panel, which we treat as the first step of implementing our initiative. This spring a regional seminar with the participation of the Chairman and members of the Panel will be organized in Warsaw.

Speaking of world peace, we cannot fail to mention the role of the Holy Father. His unswerving commitment was the reason why the Iraqi crisis was not perceived anywhere as a conflict of civilizations and religions. It is our intention to maintain the priority nature of our relations with the Holy See, among Poland's political tasks.

Honorable Members!

The consolidation of peace in the world requires a more effective approach to the challenges of globalization. We appreciate the significance of sustainable development, environmental protection, and social problems on the UN agenda. The Polish representatives in the Economic and Social Council will be active in responding to these challenges. Poland will back actions designed to create conditions to attain the long-term goals of social and economic development, particularly in the developing countries, and to meet the basic needs of the people inhabiting them. We will stress the supreme importance of combating poverty by suppressing its sources and limiting its effects. Likewise, we will underline in particular the need for recipient states of the aid of international organizations to comply with the principles of good governance.

In the fight against poverty, hunger and devastating epidemics in many regions of the world, we will broader cooperation with the relevant specialized organizations of the United Nations system. We will support actions serving the realization of the Millennium development goals.

The credibility of our actions will be enhanced by the implementation of the Polish program of official development and humanitarian aid, adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2003. The elaboration of the aid strategy was indispensable, since Poland is perceived as a potential aid-donor by our non-European partners.

Drawing on the basic program documents of the Johannesburg Summit, Poland will commit to the activities serving the implementation of its provisions, both on a national and international scale.

We will emphasize the importance of the factor of common values in international relations. We attach particular significance to the advancement of the idea of the "Community of Democracies", initiated in Warsaw in the year 2000.

We will remain active in disseminating and strengthening the international system of human rights protection. We believe that human rights violations, unacceptable for fundamental reasons, additionally jeopardize the stability of international relations and hamper international economic and social development.

Honorable Members!

Membership of the European Union, influencing Poland's new role in the world, will have impact on the development of our bilateral relations - including economic ones - with the states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Undoubtedly, new opportunities for Poland will open up there. Our long-term priorities will be incorporated in a comprehensive strategy towards developing countries. This strategy is will soon be completed.

Our first task is to become actively involved in the platforms of dialog conducted by the European Union with non-European states. Accordingly, Poland will commit to the projects connected with the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU with regard to the Barcelona Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Dialog. We will continue seeking ASEM membership for Poland - concerning the Asia-Europe dialog, and will participate in the 3rd Summit of the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Mexico.

Our involvement in Iraq has brought with itself a task of creating a "diplomatic cover", undertaking initiatives designed to invigorate our relations with the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia. Those contacts have exposed a considerable potential for economic cooperation. It is being gradually tapped. We are grateful to our Arab partners and other neighbors of Iraq for their understanding of the Polish role in Iraq, and for all valuable pieces of advice.

The role of the West's contacts and dialog with Arab and Muslim states is growing. Poland wishes to contribute to it, drawing on the traditions of tolerance, respect for diversity and dialog between civilizations. We will support genuine breakthrough in the settlement of the Middle East conflict, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by our membership of the European Union.

Poland's activity in Asian countries will focus on the development of political dialog, invigoration of economic cooperation and improvement of trade balance with all of our leading partners including China, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia. We will also gradually rebuild the position of Poland in sub-Saharan

Africa, among others by taking advantage of the Union infrastructure of cooperation with that region, including the Cotonou Convention.

We are already making, and we will continue to make, our own efforts to renew close cooperation with selected, traditional African partners.

Our most important partners in Latin America will include Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina.

We have plans for more intense political contacts - including at the highest level - with the states of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Honorable Members!

We wish to exploit the benefits of our membership of the Union to advance our economic interests in third countries. We must achieve closer integration of our foreign economic policy with other policy instruments.

This should increase our ability to effectively support foreign investments in Poland and Polish investments abroad. We will also be concerned about the level and structure of our trade and the effectiveness of our undertakings. The time has come to introduce systemic solutions in order to make the Foreign Ministry and Polish missions abroad more economy-oriented. The time has come to elaborate an effective formula of Poland's economic promotion abroad.

Mr. Speaker! Honorable Members!

International politics has long ceased to be the exclusive domain of governments. The growing role of non-state and non-governmental entities poses an ever greater challenge to political practice and the functioning of international institutions.

We attach considerable importance to the cooperation with the local government structures which have the best orientation in the field. This allows them - in cooperation with the MFA - to effectively implement the outlined tasks, also in the framework of international cooperation.

The MFA appreciates the role of non-governmental organizations in public diplomacy, and will continue its cooperation with them in the framework of the Council for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations, established in 2002.

The intense activity of the Polish Humanitarian Action, Caritas, or the Polish Medical Mission in Iraq, for example, indicates the need to tap the potential of non-governmental organizations to support Polish foreign policy and build a positive image of our country in the world.

On January 1, 2004, the executive regulations to the Law on publicly beneficial activity and volunteers entered into force, regulating the financial principles of cooperation with these organizations.

It is a crucial task of diplomacy to promote a favorable image of Poland abroad. Our international activity has contributed to an increase of interest in Poland and the acknowledgement of the potential we are contributing to the European Union and the transatlantic community. We want the name of Poland to be readily recognizable around the world. To achieve that, however, we should improve the coordination of our promotion programs and streamline the implementation process of sector projects - in such fields as culture or sports. We should also make better use of science in promoting the country. Our participation in the "Cultural Olympiad", to be held simultaneously with the Summer Olympic Games in Athens, will be an important undertaking.

Diplomacy is not all grand politics. The fundamental tasks of the Polish foreign service include and will include the protection of the interests of Polish citizens abroad, close monitoring of the situation in individual parts of the world and - depending on the existing threats - undertaking actions to ensure the safety of Poles during their stay abroad, with particular note to the dangers of terrorist attacks.

In the implementation process of the Government Program of Cooperation with Polonia and Poles Abroad, particular attention will be paid to the assessment of the fulfillment by the governments of countries inhabited by Polish communities of bilateral and multilateral international agreements affecting the condition of the Poles residing in those countries.

One of priority directions will remain a comprehensive development of Polonia education. Another priority, in connection with Poland's EU membership, will be to upgrade the assistance of the consular missions in EU states for Polonia initiatives and undertakings designed to promote Poland in their countries of residence.

Mr. President! Mr. Speaker! Mr. Prime Minister! Honorable Members!

Our accession to the European Union marks the implementation of the last among the strategic objectives of the Polish foreign policy formulated over 10 years ago. They included: reconstruction of our sovereignty, normalization of relations with our neighbors, development of regional cooperation, security guarantees through integration with NATO, assurance of development and prosperity through membership of the European Union.

These goals determined the directions of the foreign policy of every government, ensuring that it transcended party lines. Today we face the necessity of charting new horizons for our foreign policy, of solidifying our position in NATO, the European Union and the international community.

We must define what kind of Europe we want, what role we should play in it, how the North Atlantic Alliance should evolve, what identity our region can acquire in the

enlarged Europe, and what profile we should adopt for our engagement beyond Europe. Such a reflection will help us deal with our immediate political dilemmas.

The decisions we take today can determine the solutions for years to come. The new challenges are a source of ever more responsible tasks for our foreign service. There appears an ever-increasing need for its further development and strengthening, also in the financial and material aspects.

Members of the Sejm!

I am confident that today's debate will help build by-partisan consensus - for the future-oriented Polish foreign policy.

Thank you for your attention.