

Eastern Promises Initiative
“Eastern Partnership: State of Play”
European Policy Centre, 8th December 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference comes at an appropriate time. Today we held the first meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Eastern Partnership countries, during which we discussed what has been achieved so far and the future challenges that we face. As you might expect, my address to you this evening is not about to dazzle you with any radical new proposals. “*Eastern Partnership: State of Play*” may sound like an action film (and, I admit, not a very good one), but those of you in search of a white-knuckle ride will be disappointed.

The poet Goethe wrote that “**In the realm of ideas, everything depends on enthusiasm. In the real world all rests on perseverance.**” The Eastern Partnership has moved from the realm of ideas into the real world, but we see no distinction between enthusiasm and perseverance. Poland has promoted the Eastern Partnership enthusiastically, and will continue to do so. **But my message tonight is that we have entered the phase when this enthusiasm must be translated into the necessary perseverance from all sides in order to deal with the tasks and challenges ahead.** I ask you to bear this in mind as I outline how the policy is progressing.

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- We are still a long way from satisfying the ambitious goals that we have set ourselves. However the process of building a common European area of democracy, prosperity and political stability is well underway – and visible progress has been made, both in the Eastern Partnership’s bilateral and multilateral relations.
 - In bilateral relations, we are closer to concluding our Association Agreements, including the DCFTA. The preparation and subsequent implementation of agreed measures will be facilitated by the Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes. Poland also believes that the process towards full visa liberalization for the citizens of the Partner Countries should be accelerated. Improved visa facilitation measures and the waiving of visa fees would demonstrate visible and tangible benefits of the Eastern Partnership.
 - We have also made substantial progress in the Eastern Partnership’s multilateral dimension. Thematic platforms have played a crucial role in helping us to identify our priorities and implement the necessary projects. The launch of our first two flagship initiatives, concerning integrated border management and energy efficiency, demonstrates the Eastern Partnership’s commitment to producing concrete results in a wide range of areas. Our next initiative, on responses to natural and man-made disasters, will be launched at tomorrow’s meeting in Gothenberg.
 - The flagship initiatives will be accompanied by a diverse range of projects, encompassing issues such as corruption, administrative reform, environmental protection, energy efficiency and youth exchanges. However I would like to stress that multilateral co-operation does not only happen at an intergovernmental level. It also

includes the co-operation of the non-governmental organizations of the Civil Society Forum. Dialogue and co-operation between parliaments and regional authorities from the EU Member States and the Partner Countries have also been set up. The Eastern Partnership will be more likely to succeed if it engages with as many elements of our societies as possible, rather than being regarded merely as a procedural instrument for high-level government delegations.

- I am pleased that the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, has accepted Polish suggestions regarding the establishment of a post of Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. The new, reinforced structure of the Commission will help to facilitate the implementation and further development of the Eastern Partnership. I support the decision to give substantial responsibility to the Commission for the Eastern Partnership's implementation.
- With a view to widening global participation in and contribution to the Eastern Partnership, Poland has advocated the involvement of third-party countries in its initiatives. Such an approach has already demonstrated its usefulness – the initiative for energy efficiency worked out by the Swedish Presidency of the EU involves Japan, Norway and the US as donors. We hope to establish a “friends of the Eastern Partnership” group, which would unite third-party countries willing to offer the Partnership their concrete support.

The Economist journal predicts that “after two years of drama – economic collapse, rollercoaster markets, Mr Obama’s election – 2010 may feel rather dull.” **It may not be glamorous, but we are looking forward to a year of slow and steady progress.** The Eastern Partnership has a hugely ambitious vision, but it will be take effort and patience to make it work. Our sole objective must be that the “Eastern Promises” of all parties are fulfilled, and I have stated on numerous occasions that the successful implementation of our ambitions will be a key priority of Poland’s Presidency of the EU in 2011. Whether through the bilateral or multilateral tracks, at intergovernmental or nongovernmental level, in cooperation with each other or with the inclusion of third-party countries, **I firmly believe that our enthusiasm and our perseverance will be handsomely rewarded.**