

*Ladies and gentleman,*

25 years ago, in 1990, we witnessed events that reshaped Central and Eastern Europe dramatically. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia declared independence. Soviet troops began to withdraw from Hungary. The so called Two-plus-four Treaty was signed, and the process of reunification of Germany was set in motion. Poland and Germany confirmed their border. Finally, Lech Wałęsa was elected as a first democratically chosen head of state in this part of the world for decades.

I choose only those five events, but the year 1990 in Europe abounded in countless similar occasions to be celebrated across the former Soviet block. **The “Paris Charter for New Europe”** crowned this positive explosion of freedom, democracy and good neighborly relations. The Charter was a symbol of hope, high expectations and incurable optimism that emerged after decades of confrontation and sorrow.

The Charter was an effort to adapt to the unknown, to provide minimum guidance for all actors. **This minimum guidance included the principles of: non-use of force; freedom to choose security relations; democracy and, last but not least, a very impressive list of human rights.** These principles, along with the Helsinki principles, were all recognized as cornerstones of the “New era of Democracy, Peace and Unity” .

It is indeed symbolic that we gathered here in Warsaw to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this important event.

On the one hand, together with some other countries, **Poland may serve as an example** of how individual freedom, market economy and effective independence can transform a former communist country into a functional democracy with growing economy which contributes to the cooperative security in Europe.

But on the other hand – here in Warsaw it is especially difficult to “turn the blind eye” to the fact that, regrettably, not all signatories have benefitted from the Paris Charter yet. Without undermining obvious achievements of the countries to the East of the Polish border, it is clear that principles from 1990 are put at stake there.

It is because of the Russian policy and aggression on Georgia and Ukraine. It is equally due to the fact that Russia decided to turn the economy into an instrument of political pressure, instead of using it for growth. Finally, it is because democracy and human rights are being constantly undermined and violated in Russia and in some other countries in the region.

Does this mean that we should give up on our values and principles?

Our achievements here in Central Europe and the endless strive of the people in Eastern Europe make me fully confident that the path we've gone through was a good choice. There should be no return from this path. **We must not compromise on rules, principles and values, which have been accepted and observed OSCE –wide. In our efforts of upholding them we shall not be discouraged by non-compliance by one state.**

*Ladies and gentleman,*

I am deeply convinced that what we need today is as follows:

**First**, we have to fully implement the concept of **comprehensive approach to security**. Well-functioning, prosperous democracies with strong civil societies, based on human rights and rule of law - democracies that are politically, economically and socially interdependent - are interested in stability rather than conflicts.

**Second**, we must display **unconditional and strict adherence to those universal standards and political obligations** which our leaders have signed up to since 1975. We must remain united in reacting to any present or future breaches of those obligations.

**Finally**, we shall reject any notion that some of us are entitled more than others to **shape our common OSCE space**. We should counter any suggestion that some of us are constrained in their rights to decide on their own future. This is the very basis not only of the OSCE documents but also of the United Nations Charter.

We obviously should not limit ourselves to repeating principles. There is a broad space for improvement. We can still strengthen the mechanisms of our current system. We also can better protect our rules and principles and ensure their efficiency. We can finally better translate the agreed values into concrete actions.

**In other words: we may and we should build upon our achievements.** It is important, however, to remember that the situation today is far less optimistic than 25 years ago. Therefore we should take a step by step approach, be patient and avoid raising expectations.

As Winston Churchill used to say: "To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day".

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming to Warsaw and I wish you fruitful and productive discussions.