

Mr President,

Mr Speaker,

Mr Prime Minister,

Members of the House,

I stand before the House today to report on Polish foreign policy for the third time. There is every reason for satisfaction as I inform you of the continued implementation of the policy of Donald Tusk's cabinet over the past few years.

We find ourselves amongst the leading European players in many areas where decisions are taken to determine the policy direction of European institutions.

We have become a partner valued by many, a partner whose opinion and counsel is frequently sought. This position is not merely a result of good fortune.

Europe needs our country's active contribution if it is to resolve the problems facing the whole Continent.

The global recession has accelerated a global political transformation. If demographics determine the future, the Western nations' share of world population will inevitably decrease. The United States, though still the only world superpower, is adapting itself to function in an international environment where responsibility and influence is spread among a greater number of players than ten years ago.

This is accompanied by the growing importance of new powers, particularly China. In a world preoccupied with countering the effects of the economic crisis, there has been a trend moving towards the defence of national markets, coupled with less generosity in terms of addressing differences in countries' level of development.

Poland's strategic goal is to play an increasingly important role in the European Union and NATO. We want to have the "West" – understood as the achievements of Western civilisation, epitomized in common values, norms and standards, not only to our West but to our East as well.

We have committed ourselves to building good relations with our neighbours. We have improved our relations with Germany and Russia. In co-operation with our partners in Central and Eastern Europe, we have made our voice not just heard but also heeded in the process of creating EU policy. Poland is enjoying its longest period of stability in the modern era. It is the mission of Polish foreign policy to ensure favourable international conditions that most comprehensively guarantee the security, democracy, freedoms and rights of its citizens, that favour social and economic modernisation and consolidate the country's international stature. The positive economic results of the last few years – the fact that Poland is the only European country that has not fallen into recession – have strengthened Poland's global position. For the first time in our

history we are being heralded as an example of sagacious economic and financial policy. Since Polish affairs are moving in the right direction, I will not propose to the House dramatic change, but rather a **continuation of the policy that has served us so well** in recent years. We must allow our ship to continue to sail serenely, powered by auspicious winds.

Members of the House,

Upon assuming the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, I formulated several priorities for the coming years:

First: a strong Poland in Europe, a patron and promoter of its Eastern policy

Poland's presence in the European Union is contributing to the formation of a new Polish identity. Today, Poland is attracting the attention of other nations not for its romantic heroism, but for the resourcefulness, inventiveness and industriousness of its people. Poles are no longer "a great national banner", as Norwid used to say, but rather an increasingly well-organised civil society.

It is in this that our compatriots and friendly foreign observers see the essence of Poland's 'Europeanness'. It draws on both the "Piast" spirit, based on Western values (and Christian roots of integration), and on the Jagiellonian spirit based on close dialogue and understanding with the East.

Members of the House,

Inspired by this message of Polish history and the uplifting experience of six years of participation in the European Union, we repeat with conviction: ***We need more Europe, not less.*** Based on our understanding of the EU as an agent for the reorganisation of Europe, we are formulating our vision of an ideal shape for EU structures. The EU's effectiveness is highly appreciated by state and international bodies, and is based upon the unique strength of a genuine intra-union sense of common purpose. It would be impossible to imagine the EU functioning if it was not rooted in a system of civilisational values and standards. It is important for us that this fundamental aspect of the Union be consolidated. That is why we can strengthen the priority we formulated two years ago: **Poland – a stakeholder in Europe.**

More Europe, not less – we share this aspiration with other countries, and it is still this concept, rather than a union based exclusively on competing national interests, that is prevalent in the EU. We should resist the logic of renationalisation and avoid contributing to a deterioration of the European Union. Let us not reduce the EU to an arena for battles between national egos. We should support those mechanisms and views in the EU that strengthen its sense of community and solidarity.

We are naturally aware that the situation in the EU is not exactly a reflection of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, the basis for the EU's anthem. It is not the case that "all men will become brothers" in the European Union anytime soon.

Numerous European trends constitute challenges for Polish foreign and domestic policy. For twenty years Poland has been in a phase of catch-up development, whilst certain other countries are already a long way down the post-industrial path. Such diversity should be reflected in EU strategy and law, whilst an appraisal of the effects of regulations should seriously take into account the principles of the single market and the need for greater economic cohesion.

The EU needs a debate on the future of the **European budget**. *We cannot have "more Europe for less money"*. That is why we are in favour of an ambitious European Union budget for the period beyond 2013, encouraging the fulfilment of the Community's growing political and treaty ambitions; a budget that will not perpetuate the division of member states in terms of affluence but will make it possible to bridge those gaps in development that still exist.

We will counteract the restriction of policies financed by the EU budget, particularly the cohesion policy and the mechanisms of the Common

Agricultural Policy. Europe still needs investment in infrastructure: in broadband internet, roads, railways and energy. A modern cohesion policy should support the European Union's social and economic development. Sound, sustainable economic growth that prevents exclusion and creates new jobs should be the cohesion policy's aim. That goal has never been more relevant than today.

Polish diplomacy has been seeking regulations of this kind. These efforts were crowned with the recent success of Prime Minister Donald Tusk at the European Council devoted to the **Europe 2020** economic strategy. Poland managed to achieve all of its goals, namely to emphasise the due importance of the cohesion policy and agricultural policy in the Strategy, to highlight the need for infrastructure investment and to take into account the different levels of development amongst member countries when implementing the Strategy.

We are also seeking a further deepening of the **internal market**. The European Commission has a special role to play here, particularly within the context of the freedom to provide services. It is the Commission that should be the guardian of free competition, and it should make every effort to ensure that public aid given by member states does not impede the four freedoms or weaken the single market.

Honourable Members,

Another challenging area is that of the European Union's activity **in foreign and security policy**. In particular, this refers to the relationship between the main – Eastern and Southern – directions of the European neighbourhood policy. It also concerns the interdependence between the Eastern Partnership, which has become the main driver of neighbourhood policy in the East, and the strategic partnership between the European Union and Russia, which is being built separately. The challenge, however, lies in the possibility of 'enlargement fatigue' in certain countries. This could evolve into a factor that disorientates and repels those countries in the EU's neighbourhood such as **Turkey and Ukraine** that aspire to join the EU. That is why we must not abandon the idea of supporting those countries' pro-European efforts - in fact we should give them our practical support. The initiated process of negotiations on the new type of association agreements with the EU will be of fundamental importance for Ukraine and Moldova, as well as the countries of the Southern Caucasus. The agreements will stimulate modernisation efforts in those countries and their gradual approximation to European standards. Liberalisation of the movement of people is equally important. We still remember the travel restrictions we ourselves experienced. We want our Eastern neighbours to be able to travel to Poland and other EU countries without unnecessary restrictions. Our aim is to formulate road maps leading to visa-free travel for the Eastern Partnership

countries, as well as Russia and the Western Balkans. Achieving that goal also requires efforts on behalf of these countries.

The Lisbon Treaty established the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service, for the better protection of our common interests. Poland is in favour of a strong role for the High Representative and the government is campaigning for the strongest possible representation of our country in the new service. Those already bemoaning Poland's supposed failure should calm their emotions with some basic facts. The Service's organisational structure has not even been established yet. In the initial phase, posts will be filled mainly by officials already working in the General Secretariat of the Council and the European Commission. Poland's argument that all states should feel that they have a joint stake in the new institution has provided a basis for the structure currently under consideration. It is also thanks to Poland's efforts that the High Representative will be required each year to provide a breakdown of employment in the Service, divided by member country, which will be evaluated by EU foreign ministers.

Polish candidates are currently competing for the positions of heads and deputy heads of delegations in 32 countries. This is the number of missions – and not the 150 that was speculated upon in the press – that are to be staffed by the end

of the year. In accordance with the new regulations, just one delegation head – the EU ambassador to Kabul – has been appointed under the new rules. No appointments will be made to any EU posts in CIS countries this year. It should be remembered that the appointing of staff to the European External Action Service will be a process spread out over several years. The MFA has created a pool of highly-qualified diplomatic staff and is preparing them to make successful applications for EU diplomatic postings. We should also remember that the transfer of some Polish diplomats to the EU's diplomatic service may not necessarily be of benefit. Is it to Poland's advantage when a highly qualified expert from the MFA ends up at an EU mission in an exotic country, with the duty of promoting the interests of the EU as a whole?

Members of the House,

The European Union is a system of connected vessels. There exist within the Community various configurations of countries, such as the 'Franco-German engine', that aim to streamline and accelerate the process of negotiation within the EU. Poland also belongs to configurations of this kind as a country with considerable potential, illustrated by its participation in the **Weimar Triangle**, and its solidarity with countries in the region. Poland is capable of creating coalitions of member countries. In the course of the climate debate we not only proposed better solutions, but also mobilised a coalition of some dozen countries

and modified the package of climate and energy commitments. We will strive to shape other EU policies in accordance with our interests.

A test of our effectiveness will be the **Polish Presidency** of the European Council in 2011, preparations for which are at an advanced stage. We have already set out its initial priorities, which include: 1) a heavy-weight task: negotiations on the Multi-Annual Financial Frameworks; 2) the internal market – new methods of economic recovery after the crisis 3) relations with Eastern European countries; 4) EU energy and energy security policy; 5) the Common Security and Defence Policy.

Let us remember that although the government will be holding the Presidency, it will also constitute a challenge for the entire Polish State. We are preparing for this task and are mobilising a Presidency corps in all our ministries. I thank the House for granting us significant funds for this purpose. We hope that the Sejm will play a prominent role in the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency. The Presidency will be a success that will strengthen Poland's position in the European Union.

Mister Speaker,

Members of the House,

The world is becoming multi-polar. In the twentieth century Europe's position regressed, particularly with the disintegration of the colonial system, whilst the significance of the United States continued to rise, reaching its zenith after victory in the Cold War. Even though the financial and economic crisis might have eroded the position of the West, particularly the United States, we must emphasise that no attractive concept of development has appeared that threatens the foundations of democracy, the free market and the rule of law. **America and Europe** still symbolise success in ensuring the prosperity of their citizens without having to resort to a quasi-military mobilisation of their societies. The community of values and democratic solutions will continue to unite Europe and North America. That is the goal of the ongoing debate within NATO, which is focused on developing a new strategy for the Alliance - the aim of the strategic dialogue between the United States and the European Union.

If one were to express in a few words the essence of the Poles' attitude towards the **United States** one could say that we hope that America will remain a "European power". We are proud that, as Europeans, we belong with Americans in an area of high security and prosperity. Our views on Euro-Atlantic security frequently coincide. I hope that the strategic dialogue between Poland and the USA, which is currently being revived, will confirm this. We are seeking a stronger US presence in Poland. This will be served by the implementation of the 2008 Declaration on Strategic Co-operation, including the development of

military co-operation, reaffirmed by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which came into effect in the past few days. This will also be enhanced by the already negotiated adjustment of the agreement on the anti-missile base to the new architecture of the MD system. A visible sign will be the upcoming planned deployment of an American *Patriot* battery, meaning the physical presence of allied forces in Poland. We are realistic about the ability of the USA to continue its present global policy, and towards our region in particular. We want **Polish-US relations** to be based not only on security policy issues, but also on greater American investment, technology and an intellectual presence in Poland. We want to reinvigorate the unique Polish-American Community of Democracies project (more on this below). The abandonment of the discrimination against Poles in US visa policy would be a positive gesture.

Members of the House,

The goal of the European **neighbourhood policy** is to build a friendly international environment. The EU's external borders must not mark a civilisational fault-line. We believe that the EU should remain open to two large neighbouring areas: the Mediterranean and the East. Our goals in each case are determined by accurately distinguishing between the two areas: whilst the southern coast of the Mediterranean is **Europe's neighbour**, the East is constituted of **European neighbours**.

It is this perception of the issues of neighbourhood that lies at the heart of the Polish-Swedish **Eastern Partnership** initiative. The initiative is designed to support the transformation processes in partner countries so that their standards approach the level of the *acquis communautaire*. Naturally, the basic modernisation work must be performed by these countries themselves.

On bilateral matters, we recognise the possibility of raising relations with **Germany** to the level of an intensive strategic partnership. The achievements of the last twenty years of reconciliation and close co-operation, including the active promotion by the Federal Republic of Germany of Poland's membership of the EU and NATO, have confirmed Germany's credibility in our eyes. Poles are no longer afraid of Germans. Germany is Poland's largest economic partner, a country with which we have close political and cultural relations. As part of the review of the Polish-German Treaty we will be looking for better ways of implementing the rights of the Polish minority in Germany and supporting the teaching of the Polish language there.

It would be hard not to mention the historic friendship with **France**, or the co-operation with our closest neighbours, such as the countries of the **Visegrad Group** and countries of the Baltic Sea region. We thank the **United Kingdom**

for its hospitality towards our compatriots. We support the Balkan countries in their efforts to join the European Union. We are benefiting from the experience of **Spain**, which currently holds the Presidency of the European Union Council. We are ready for similarly fruitful co-operation with the next presidencies from Belgium and Hungary. We are already co-operating within the **Poland-Denmark-Cyprus trio**.

Members of the House,

Speaking of relations with **Russia**, we recognise that despite their improvement in recent months, they are still burdened by tragic historical issues. I think that the Polish and Russian approach to the 70th anniversary of the Katyń crime is an indication of how far our relations have been normalised. Yesterday we witnessed a historic moment when the Prime Ministers of Poland and Russia jointly commemorated the victims of Stalin's regime: Polish officers, prisoners of war murdered by the NKVD in 1940, but also Russians, Ukrainians, Jews and members of many other nationalities of the former USSR who fell victim to purges and other forms of Soviet repression. We are in favour of depoliticising the Katyń problem as well as other delicate issues in the history of Polish-Russian relations. I thank the work of the Group on Difficult Matters, co-chaired by Professor Adam Daniel Rotfeld and the academic Anatoly Torkunov. This group of outstanding historians and experts directed the historical discussion

towards dialogue and the search for truth. It was a long path to reconciliation with Germany, and so it must be with the Russians. Recalling the momentous critical statements against Stalinism articulated recently by President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, I believe that further gestures and acts are possible.

We want better economic, cultural and scientific co-operation with Russia. The EU-Russian Partnership for Modernisation project, launched during the EU-Russia summit in Stockholm late last year, should enhance such co-operation.

Members of the House,

Ukraine has just passed an important exam in democracy. The recent presidential elections in that country showed just how rapidly their civil society is maturing. We hope that the Ukrainian political class will direct Ukraine towards accelerated modernisation of the state and economy, and that it will confirm its pro-European choice by undertaking the implementation of Eastern Partnership projects. We hope that Ukraine, as it moves towards institutionalised Europe, will maintain good relations and co-operation with its neighbouring countries. Poland will remain an advocate of the Ukrainian cause if Ukraine so wishes.

We have followed the strengthening of **Belarusian** statehood with attention and support. However, in post-Soviet realities, independence cannot be consolidated without the progress of democracy. For this reason, whilst declaring our commitment to broad co-operation with the Belarusian Republic, we consistently encourage the Belarusian authorities to introduce systemic changes. In line with the principles of democracy and human rights, such changes should include the right to free association, in particular reference to the Polish minority in Belarus - this is something upon which we insist.

A democratic **Moldova** is important to Poland and the European Union. We support the democratic government coalition in Chisinau, a support we demonstrated by offering it credits and technical assistance. We are also mobilising our partners in the EU to help Moldova.

We consistently insist upon the territorial integrity of **Georgia**. We are encouraging a greater momentum of modernisation reforms in that country. Our experience shows that this is the surest road to membership in Western institutions.

Involvement in the Eastern Partnership offers a great opportunity for Georgia and the other countries of the Southern Caucasus – i.e. **Armenia and**

Azerbaijan - in their efforts to transform. We also see a key role for these countries, as well as the **countries of Central Asia**, in the creation of an alternative transit route for energy supplies.

Members of the House,

The second priority I formulated two years ago was:

Poland as a strong link in the North Atlantic Alliance

We live in times when the **security** of Poland and Europe is not only affected by classical threats, but also by a diverse array challenges such as energy crises, climate change, migration, the threat of terrorist attacks, regional conflicts, cyber attacks, violations of human rights, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other similar phenomena.

However, until the world sees the triumph of the principles elaborated by Immanuel Kant in his essay on eternal peace, no self-respecting government can dismiss threats and the possibility of armed conflicts. The 2008 war in the South Caucasus demonstrated that the use of military power to settle regional conflicts in Europe is a realistic possibility. This is why the allied transatlantic bonds that galvanise Western civilisation continue to play a crucial role.

The participation of a Polish expert in the group drafting the Alliance's new strategy is an affirmation of our position within NATO.

In work on the New Strategic Concept, designed to prepare NATO to cope with new challenges, we want NATO to preserve its character as a defensive alliance and to substantiate the security guarantees under article 5 of the Washington Treaty. A NATO capable of coping with future challenges is an organisation capable of defending the territory of its member states as well as being prepared to conduct out-of-area operations.

Members of the House,

According to Saint Augustine, a war can only be just if inaction could lead to a greater misfortune than armed conflict. **Military operations**, connected with great costs and risk to the safety and lives of soldiers, are never popular. Since we want to play an increasingly important role in European and Euroatlantic structures, we cannot just be beneficiaries of the security guaranteed by these structures.

Allow me remind you that we went into Afghanistan with NATO because our ally, the United States, had been attacked. The decision taken in 2001 was reaffirmed in 2005, when Poland bolstered its presence in Afghanistan. We have upheld that decision, supplementing it with a cohesive strategy of participation in foreign missions. Consistent with that strategy, we have been withdrawing from the contingents where our usefulness has diminished, in order to strengthen

NATO's priority mission in Afghanistan, on which the Alliance's credibility largely depends. For that reason Poland has the seventh-largest contingent amongst the 43 countries involved in the ISAF operation. I call on the opposition to take a responsible and bipartisan approach regarding our engagement in Afghanistan.

Our strategy in Afghanistan is not limited to military action. To achieve success, it is essential to help with economic development and restore the Afghans' hope of a normal life. However, without ensuring at least basic security, restoring that hope will not be possible. We do not intend to stay there forever, and within the next few years we want to transfer full responsibility for its security and development to the Afghan authorities.

Members of the House,

The European Union is the second pillar of our security. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty creates new opportunities to develop the Union's crisis response and common defence capabilities. It is necessary to strengthen this sphere of collaboration between member countries if Europe wants to take its due place among the world powers. As I have already noted, we want the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy to be one of the priorities of our presidency.

When we speak of a secure European Union, the issue of **energy security** comes immediately to the fore. The EU needs to possess the instruments and mechanisms that will allow it to assist even a single member country threatened with a dramatic reduction in its energy supplies. We support initiatives designed to boost energy security and solidarity, such as the construction of connectors between national gas networks. We support projects that are important for the diversification of gas supplies to the EU, such as the Nabucco pipeline and, more broadly, the whole concept of the Southern Energy Corridor. We are seeking a stronger role for the European Commission as guardian of the common energy market - we are seeking to strengthen the communal character of energy policy.

Europe still needs the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe**.

As a structure that encompasses an area from Vancouver to Vladivostok, it is ideal as a forum for debate on the future of European security. That debate should cover all aspects of 'hard' and 'soft' security and must not avoid assessment of the ways that members of the organisation fulfil their international commitments. This includes the issue of conventional disarmament.

Honourable Members,

The global economic crisis has imposed changes on the institutional architecture of the international financial and economic system. The global economic

implosion opened the eyes of governments and institutions to the complex interdependencies within the world economic system. Decisions are increasingly being taken at global forums such as the **G20**. Since we **regard ourselves as a stakeholder in the European Union**, we suggest that the EU speaks with one voice on behalf of all its members. It should take into account the experiences in our part of Europe, which has made a successful transition from a centrally-planned to a modern free-market economy.

Members of the House,

Third: I underlined that Poland needs to enhance its reputation as a successful country that loves freedom and is capable of sharing it with others

We are witness to a rivalry between two diverse visions for development and the building of prosperity - democratic capitalism and autocratic capitalism. To us Poles and Europeans it is not without significance which of these visions prevails.

It gives us immense satisfaction to see that the **Community of Democracies**, an initiative of my great predecessor, Bronisław Geremek, will soon be marking its tenth anniversary. On that occasion I will have the honour of hosting in Kraków on 2nd-4th July the foreign ministers of Community member states. We have invited representatives from over a hundred states to take part. Those present

will include democratic activists and leaders, representatives of international NGOs, scholars, businessmen and journalists. The purpose of the meeting will be to reaffirm the Warsaw Declaration of 2000 and the international community's action programme in support of democracy for the coming years. I ask that the Sejm adopt a resolution – together with the European Parliament and the United States Congress – in support of the Community.

Poles appreciate the value of democracy. That is why we are glad that the Permanent Secretariat of the Community, along with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, has chosen to establish its headquarters in Warsaw. I am confident that the Kraków meeting will help to further promote the experience of our region's peaceful democratic transformations. I would be grateful to the House if it adopts legislation regulating the activity of the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The 30th anniversary this year of the establishment of Solidarity will offer a further opportunity to honour the movements for freedom in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is also an excellent occasion to express our gratitude to all those who backed the process of transformations in Poland and the Solidarity movement. The motto: "No freedom without Solidarity" conveys a universal message.

We want our partners to perceive Poland as a country that is not only modern, but also rooted in the world's heritage. Exquisite music touches human hearts regardless of ethnic origin or linguistic barriers. The Year of Chopin, being marked across the world, is not only a chance to acquaint one's self with the music of a great composer, but with the culture of his native land.

At the world EXPO in Shanghai we will present Poland as a country with a robust and modern economy, successfully operating as part of the European single market. We will continue to pursue the development of economic, investment and technological co-operation with our partners in Asia and the Persian Gulf. We intend to continue developing friendly dialogue with Israel. We will seek new opportunities for advancing economic relations with our partners in Latin America and continue our engagement in development co-operation with African countries.

Members of the House,

Development co-operation has become a key instrument of our foreign policy.

It is also an important element in the promotion of Poland's image, particularly in countries covered by the Eastern Partnership and in places where Polish contingents are deployed, particularly Afghanistan.

These efforts often pass unnoticed by the media, so let me remind you: last year, in Ghazni – the capital of the province where our contingent is stationed – we equipped a local hospital, built roads and a radio station. We have organised vocational training for women. This year the aid budget at the disposal of the MFA totals PLN 100 million, of which we intend to spend PLN 35 million in Afghanistan.

By engaging in development co-operation, we are providing a tangible expression of solidarity with societies that, unlike ours, are unable to enjoy the fruits of prosperity. A few months ago in Kiev I visited an orphanage established thanks to the joint efforts of Poland, Germany and Ukraine. That is just one project, but it shows us that something that was unthinkable in the past can today be made reality.

If we want our endeavours in development co-operation to be appreciated, and if we want our actions to be effective, we need new legal and institutional instruments that are tailored to modern standards. The government will submit a draft of relevant legislation later this year.

Honourable Members,

Fourth: Poland as a country that supports its diaspora and is reinforced by its dynamism.

Together with **Poles** scattered across the world we constitute a community of 55 million people who identify with the same traditions, history and culture. The presence of members of that community on all continents is a great asset in terms of making contacts with our foreign partners.

We are also mindful that our compatriots will only be strong partners when they have a strong position in the countries in which they live. Helping our compatriots abroad to cultivate their attachment to Polish tradition and culture and defence of their rights is one of our most important tasks.

Last year, for the first time, we published a Report on the Situation of the Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad. It is a product of collaboration with other state institutions, particularly the Senate, Polish and Polish-diaspora organisations and NGOs. It constitutes the first such comprehensive treatment of the subject. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now preparing an Atlas of the Presence of the Polish Diaspora and Poles in the World.

Members of the House,

We rightly consider the lifting of internal borders between the states of the Schengen zone as a great achievement of European integration, a symbolic end to an era of centuries of wars and conquests, legitimised by a struggle to preserve and extend borders. That period claimed the lives of millions of

Europeans and eroded the economic foundations of the existence of European nations.

The consular service might become an area of pioneering co-operation on a European scale. The requirements associated with the functioning of the Schengen zone and the need to rationalise expenditure on consular services for people travelling to Europe encourage us to seek innovative solutions.

A few months ago we signed an agreement with Sweden, according to which a Swedish consul will perform his duties at the Consulate General of the RP in Kaliningrad. We also intend to sign agreements on visa representation, making it possible to issue visas on behalf of a state that does not have its own mission in a given country. Since we do not have missions in many African and Latin American countries, we want to take advantage of the well-developed network of missions maintained there by other European states. We are offering our partners similar assistance in places where we are better represented, namely in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

We are conducting talks within the framework of the Visegrad Group aimed at establishing joint consular offices and the mutual exchange of consuls. The first concrete resultt was the launching of the Visegrad House in Cape Town.

Honourable Members,

Providing care and assistance to our citizens abroad is one of the foreign service's key priorities. The work of consuls attracts media attention in crisis situations, when you have to evacuate people or help compatriots who find themselves in danger. But aside from emergencies, consular staff help thousands of our citizens with their daily problems and handle the cases of foreigners intending to visit our country each day. Poland's image largely depends on the efficiency and professionalism of our consuls, who are the first representatives of the Polish State that most foreigners meet.

We have responded to the challenges confronting the consular service with a technical and organisational revolution. By introducing modern IT systems we have enhanced the efficiency of our missions. The establishment of e-consulates will radically facilitate the receipt and processing of visa applications. The introduction of mobile consulates will change the way our missions operate: instead of clients having to cover long distances to the closest consulate or waiting for weeks to receive replies by mail, it will be the consul, appropriately equipped, who will perform his duties closer to the clients. We have started establishing a consular call centre, which will be a fast and simple way to provide information and help, if needed, to any part of the world. We support Polish migrant workers when they make the difficult decision to return home.

Members of the House,

Fifth: Polish diplomacy as an effective service

The aspiration to compete in the European “champions’ league” requires improved team-working capabilities and better technique and organisation. The **merging of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Office of the Committee of European Integration** is a consequence of European integration and of the erosion of boundaries between foreign policy and foreign affairs connected with EU membership. We have created a new strength by the joining together of two organisations with mutually complementary experiences, competencies and working cultures.

Poland’s Presidency of the European Council will be a significant test of the effectiveness of the new structure. It will constitute a multi-stage campaign, the execution of which requires a professional and mobile service, capable of responding rapidly on a global scale.

Despite a tight budget and populist attacks, we will continue the process of modernising the Polish foreign service. I told the House about the related problems, challenges and opportunities last year, the first six months of which were particularly difficult for our service and the its modernisation programme because of the sudden depreciation of the zloty in relation to other currencies. Today I only wish to repeat that the creation of a modern, highly motivated and

educated staff involved in European co-ordination and foreign policy is a long-term investment rather than a short-lived whim. Equipping that service with modern work and communication tools is a critical element of its preparation to handle tasks transcending the presidency of the European Union. We will not fulfil aspirations worthy of the European Union's sixth biggest state without overcoming years of underinvestment in the foreign service. Foreign missions serve the entire state administration, and the consular division serves our citizens and emigrants just as other institutions in Poland.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a leader in rationalising employment and the utilisation of budgetary funds. We have largely financed our investments and reforms through our own savings. I'd like to recall at this point that we are erecting in Brussels the largest Polish building abroad since the Seventies, that we are nearing completion of the Consulate-General building in Lvov, and that we have started work on new embassy buildings in Minsk and Baghdad. Within the next few weeks we will present a long-term plan for financing the construction of the new Polish embassy in Berlin. It will be a stately building, yet the cost of its construction will be lower than originally anticipated. In Vilnius, we are preparing new premises for the Polish embassy at the historic Pac Palace. Within the next few months we plan to acquire new premises for the London consulate and we are finalising work on the new premises of Poland's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York. In several cities around the

world, including Brussels, London, Stockholm, Madrid and Bucharest our small but well-equipped Institutes of Culture are becoming recognisable symbols of good Polish taste.

Finally – though I should perhaps have started with this – we are investing in people as never before. The recently established MFA Professional Development Centre is launching training programmes that are without precedent for years. By freezing salaries at the managerial level we have been able to substantially raise the remuneration of the newest MFA employees, which immediately stimulated interest in work at the Ministry. Contrary to media reports, analysts and experts are not leaving the MFA. In fact, we are receiving applications from experienced candidates, including those who want to return from the West, and from EU institutions.

I wish to ask the Honourable Members to support the efforts to modernise the MFA. Through the adoption of a new foreign service act, we need to obtain funds for the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the creation of incentives for work abroad, particularly in difficult and dangerous locations. That should not only transform Polish diplomacy into a fully-fledged service, but also compensate its members – if only in a modest degree - for their new demands and duties.

Members of the House,

The history of the last 300 years can be interpreted as a series of unceasing attempts to extricate Poland from the periphery of Europe. In addition to geopolitical obstacles, that was hindered by the insufficiency of our economic potential. This time things are different, and our success will depend on ourselves alone: our ability to innovate, our commitment and dedication.

European integration has given us our opportunity. We see Poland's involvement in the integration processes in Europe as the primary way of attaining the national goal of ensuring the country's security and modernisation. Recent years have strengthened our conviction that we can make full use of the chance we have won, fulfilling the testament of our forebears and laying the foundations for a better future for the next generations of Poles.

I thank the House for listening to my report and I request its acceptance.