

The Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments Bratislava, 26 May 2007

UKRAINE, THE EASTERN NEIGHBOUR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Speech by Mr. Oleksandr Moroz,
Speaker of the Supreme Council of Ukraine**

Dear Mr. Chairman, dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure that the present conference takes place in Bratislava – the capital city of our good neighbour, Slovak Republic, which not long ago has been treading its uneasy way towards the European Union, and now endeavours to share with Ukraine its experience of joining the EU.

I am grateful to Mr. Speaker of the National Council, Mr. Paška, and to all the moderators of the Conference for inviting Ukrainian delegation to participate in this particularly important event and giving me the floor to deliver a speech.

I listened attentively to the report of Task Force, headed by my colleague Mr. Paška. This is serious, substantial and analytical document, which complies with the spirit of Rome 2000 and Hague 2004 Conferences. I have consciously used the term “our conference”, because I am confident the time will come when Ukraine will be not just a guest, but its rightful member.

Hereby, on behalf of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine I again testify that people of Ukraine, having determined the strategic course for European integration and the Ukraine’s membership in the European Union, despite certain internal and external obstacles, steadily pursues this way. As for the majority of Ukrainians’ attitude towards Ukraine’s accession to the EU, it’s practically unanimous and it is “yes, we should join the EU”.

Therefore, state authorities of Ukraine, majority of political powers, practically the whole Ukrainian parliament put serious hopes on successful completion of negotiations on conclusion of a new basic treaty, which will replace the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine.

What's our view of this document?

The new treaty is to become an instrument of implementation of new perspectives and practical measures on further development of our state, based on its European choice. It would be great if the leaders of the European Union could officially confirm their repeated declarations on recognition of the credibility of Ukraine's European aspiration. These are neither guarantees, nor obligations. It's just a positive signal.

Moreover, current framework of the EU – Ukraine relationship based on “partnership” principles corresponds neither to the interests of Ukraine, nor to the actual status of our bilateral cooperation.

As for the contents of the new document, it is our belief that it should be based on the principles of economic integration and political association of Ukraine to the EU in order to broaden the dialogue in all spheres of interaction: establishment of the Free Trade Zone, free transition of commodities, people, services and capital. It will result in deeper and more fruitful integration of Ukraine's economy into the European Union market, creation of certain institutional base for the future political associated membership of Ukraine in the EU.

The European Union is experienced in concluding agreements on association with countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as with Turkey. We suggest developing of such experience by preparing a dynamic bilateral document, which, being implemented, could allow us to go far beyond the limits set by fulfilment of its objectives, if both parties would be ready to do so.

I would like to exploit this opportunity once again to address the EU leadership and its member states: it is time to decide definitely on prospects you see for Ukraine. Pressing relations with Ukraine into the narrow framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy without the perspective of its integration to the EU obviously brings nothing to the both. This complies neither with ambitions of the EU, nor with the interests of our country. And this will not promote cooperation of both the EU and Ukraine with other countries and regions, which strive for strengthening relations with the European Union. I mean, before all, Russian Federation, Belarus, Moldova, Transcaucasian and Central Asian states.

It is clear that European Neighbourhood Policy, developed as the EU's reaction to challenges it faced after expansion, was the necessary step. Positive results that appeared after proper execution of the Action Plan as this policy's key element evidently prove the necessity for developing the next stage of the EU's relations with its neighbours. And there are only three such neighbours in the East: Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

We hope that the EU's current proposals, which should be published in June 2007, will stipulate differentiated attitude to the neighbouring states, which declare their intention to integrate into the EU. This is about the peculiarities of the candidates' development, as well as duration, nature and dynamics of its relations with the EU, level of conformity of national legislation to European values, state of

fighting terrorism, illegal migration, human trafficking, and participation in ensuring stability in the candidate's region by means of promoting freedom, security and rule of law.

Obviously, approaching the European standards of state life – this is our internal business. Speaking figuratively, Europe has to be built in our country by ourselves only. That is how we understand our task. But support from the EU is necessary, and the respective statements from your side are absolutely not irrelevant.

It is important to remind, that according to the evaluation of the European Commission and European Parliament, today's cooperation with Ukraine in the framework of the neighbourhood policy is one of the most efficient. So to say, positive implementation of Ukraine – EU Action Plan opens nice perspectives for Ukraine's involvement into the EU internal market functioning, institutional interaction, and its active participation in developing common European policies.

However, provided such a positive background, suggestions submitted during the last months by the European Commission concerning further cooperation with Ukraine (as new initiatives in terms of European Neighbourhood Policy) are not really attractive for Ukraine, because most of them are just elements of existing cooperation.

I am confident, that even improved neighbouring policy will not replace objective necessity of joining the EU by Ukraine, even in long-term perspective. We have to think about more practical ways of preparation for Ukraine's membership in the Union. We are ready to propose certain alternatives, including multidimensional development of existing cooperation.

To our opinion, new integration mechanism with regard to Ukraine should at most effectively ensure its stepwise approach to the EU. We agree that transition from one phase to another should take place after thorough control over fulfilment of existing agreements.

On the way of implementing its European integration course, Ukraine adheres to the Article 49 of the European Union Founding Agreement, according to which any European country that respects the principles stated in part one, Article 6 of the Agreement may approach the European Commission with an application of obtaining membership in the European Union. In the new document it will be relevant to refer to this norm regarding the state, which recognizes, respects, and practically implements principles of fundamental freedoms, democracy, human rights, rule of law, etc.

However, I have to speak frankly about this. Strengthening the development in Ukraine has had main obstacles so far. Today, we experience the artificial political crisis in Ukraine. And its reason is the fight for the absolute power of the President of Ukraine; it is fight for the powers of those political forces, which did not assure the winner of last elections, which were proved to be the most democratic in the whole history of Ukraine. So the fight switched by the President appears to be the fight against the parliamentarism and against the constitution. There were two decrees issued by the President about the elimination of the powers of the parliament and preventing the Constitutional Court to pass the legal decisions. The three judges of the Constitutional Court were fired and some other judges are persecuted by the Security Bureau, which is shame. Then, also Prosecutor's General Office, the prosecution; there was an attempt to arrest the Minister of Internal Affairs, who acted entirely within the framework of Constitution. And against the law, President issued few other decrees, for example with regard to the broadening of the State Security Council, which subsidiary to the President. And again, according to the presidential will some police forces came to Kiev.

They say that parliament is not working, however the parliament is working at the moment, and the government assured the highest increase in the GDP growth during the last months. I am talking frankly with you and I am conscious of what I am talking about. I think your reaction to the situation in Ukraine will be very useful and will be definitely used to give evaluation to the actions of non-democratic forces in Ukraine.

Joining the EU is protracted and complicated process. And it is essential, for we are talking about the candidate for the EU membership with potentially powerful economy, which will take important place in common European integration processes. I hope the processes will liven up, taking into account the influence of the new leadership in Germany and France.

Recognition of Ukraine's European integration perspective is important for us from ethical viewpoint, and also as incentive for Ukrainian authorities to stir up implementation of internal reforms, and especially for consolidation of Ukrainian society around the European integration idea.

Of course, we are not just sitting and twiddling our thumbs. I would like to stress once again: we are conscious that such decision will depend above all on ourselves. We work hard on this, and we will work harder to make Ukraine turn into powerful and democratic European state. On that point, I guess, the issue of official legalization of Ukraine as a rightful member of the European Union will be shifted into technical dimension.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.