

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

120 SESP 05 E



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SPRING SESSION

ADDRESS

by

H.E. Mr France CUJKATI
President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia

Grand Union Hall, Grand Hotel Union,
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Tuesday 31 May 2005

Dear President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, esteemed members of national delegations, distinguished guests, Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be able to address you today, and I am particularly honoured that you all gathered here in Slovenia in a year characterised by two important anniversaries: the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, and the 50th anniversary of the first conference of NATO parliamentarians.

Although the days of battles and victories, of courage and resistance, of humiliation and death had long passed, they have remained irrevocably incorporated in our present. Europe and the entire world were devastated by the two cataclysms of the 20th century both in the physical and in the moral sense. Millions of people lost their lives, and the world witnessed the holocaust and the concentration camps. Yet despite all tragedies, thanks to the overall assistance of trans-Atlantic partners after the war Europe was able to regain its strengths and step on the path towards integration, with the aim of preventing a possible reoccurrence of the tragic events of the past. The milestones in this process were the Washington Treaty establishing the Atlantic Alliance, and the Treaty of Rome setting the basis for the European Union of today.

In a century marked by violent ideologies and wars, by the dissolution of empires and by the creation of new states, Slovenians shared Europe's fate. Once those turbulent times were over, we created a country of our own. We defended it with weapons and had to go a long way to finally obtain international recognition. We are therefore well aware that countries may not be accountable for their acts only to themselves. In a world as interdependent as ours, each of us is accountable to all and to everyone, and making a better world is our common duty and common opportunity. Slovenia joined the European Union and NATO to provide for its future with the same means as other countries, and is willing to take over its share of responsibility for a safe Euro-Atlantic area.

Nowadays, the threats to world peace and security are no longer wars in the classical sense of the word, nor weapons. The world of today is interdependent, and this is probably what makes it most vulnerable. We have to deal with new biological threats, nuclear and chemical weapons, international organised crime, and cruel international terrorism. These threats take no account of national borders or state neutrality, and even less of international rules. Encouraged by such facts, we come to reflect upon how to protect ourselves successfully against the threats of the present.

Well, the answer to the above question is the same as it was fifty years ago: NATO. We see no other alternative. We are of course aware that NATO, as a result of the changes occurred in the world, particularly in Europe, is undergoing changes as well. Its new role is to defend and promote a positive development of those values which it had initially been created to defend. What direction NATO development will take is of course a matter of joint consideration. The new NATO is increasingly often dealing with new risks and threats, and terrorism is just the first of the list. In the struggle against terrorism, it is of utmost importance to eliminate the reasons which stand behind it, to dedicate it sufficient resources and political will, as well as to strengthen the cooperation among the allies on a long term basis. What is needed now is action within the framework of international organisations at global and regional levels, as well as at the national level in the sense of adequate legislation and an efficient implementation thereof.

The key element of the struggle against terrorism is international cooperation. Only by further enhancing the overall relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels we will be able to prevent the threats of terrorism in the world. I am therefore certain that considering the present developments in the world, parliamentarians should make even more efforts to eliminate the reasons for the arising conflicts, to strengthen the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, the dialogue between different cultures and convictions, mutual understanding and respect, and to guarantee permanent peace. It is our duty and responsibility to act together, to promote the implementation of agreements, to cooperate in finding new ways to properly respond to terrorist threats, and to foster the political dialogue, finally contributing to peace, security and stability in the world.

The dynamics of modern security requires NATO to conduct a proactive policy, which means that it does not respond only to situations which have already escalated into hardly controllable regional and international crises of significant dimensions. For an efficient and timely functioning, the Alliance needs military structures able to quickly react in case of a crisis, and needs to adjust the speed of political decision-making accordingly, which is certainly a difficult task.

It is here that I believe a special role can be played by the parliaments, through their integration and actions within interparliamentary assemblies.

Parliamentary assemblies as such are not intended only to represent and support the objectives of individual international (governmental) organisations in the national parliaments and in the public, but also imply a greater involvement of the members of national parliaments in the activities of individual international organisations and international policy. They act as a forum for the exchange of different opinions, views and ideas which represent the political driving force of the organisation. Moreover, by means of an attentive and often critical monitoring of the work of government representatives, parliamentary assemblies exercise an objective or at least moral supervision of the work of the governmental dimension, either independently or through national parliaments of the member states.

Parliamentary assemblies are indeed seen as a forum for the exchange and coordination of different views and opinions, as most decisions adopted at the governmental level depend on the political approval of the national parliaments, and will only be implemented in accordance with the internal procedures of the individual member state.

International cooperation among parliamentarians is indeed an important and efficient form of functioning and cooperation in the globalising society. Parliamentary diplomacy is becoming an increasingly successful manner to solve global issues, frictions and challenges. More and more, international organisations are becoming aware of the need for a parliamentary dimension, as the implementation of their decisions is still closely related to the work of national parliaments which approve and ratify the adopted decisions and agreements. The issues addressed by international organisations are usually global and supranational, and rarely concern the traditional relations among the countries. Thus, the role of parliamentary control is even more important and responsible, while interparliamentary cooperation at different levels is gradually becoming a form of global control.

In this respect, the role of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is particularly important, as it discusses all aspects of international security and tries to find an answer to the security challenges of the present.

Allow me to conclude by saying – after a little more than a year from Slovenia's accession to the Atlantic Alliance – a few words about our country's contribution to NATO.

In terms of military and defence, NATO probably has not gained much from such accession. Slovenia is a small country, with a relatively small army, which is however well trained, well armed, able to make fast movements, and plays an active role in peace-keeping operations, particularly in Southeast Europe.

Nevertheless, with Slovenia becoming one of the members, NATO extended its area of influence towards a part of Europe and of the world governed by the respect for human rights, human dignity, the rule of law, free market and competition, as well as by the respect for the values that NATO has defended and enforced ever since its establishment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our success and our trust into the future of Europe and of the world are based on our common will to respect and protect the above values and principles. A NO at the referendum on the Constitution for Europe is therefore not a tragedy. We are and continue to be devoted to our common values and to our common will to create a world made to the measure of man.