SREČNO 2005!


O.p. zaradi avstričnosti prispevka objavljamo gostinskega uglednega gostu v izvorniku oz. angleškem jeziku.

Honorable Rector of the University of Ljubljana,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
I wish to thank the University of Ljubljana for their warm welcome. It is a great pleasure for me to join you today.

I am grateful to Prof. Jeremiek for giving me the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience.

I would like to begin by congratulating the Slovenian people on their successful entry to the EU and NATO.
Turkey welcomed and supported the friendly nation of Slovenia in this process. As an ally, we have happily observed that the transition periods towards the EU and the NATO membership have been successfully fulfilled by Slovenia. The Slovenian peoples' achievement in establishing a full democracy and a dynamic economy in a short period of time is most admirable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
The dynamic nature of the EU makes it a continuous center of focus for all Europeans who share the ideals of the Union: peace and stability of the continent for the benefit of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and market economy. And a union where welfare is shared by all. Only five decades ago, this might have seemed like a dream, but today, the project of a Europe whole and free is closer to reality than ever before.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Turkey's political, cultural and economic engagement with Europe has a background of more than two centuries. And from its inception about eighty years ago, the Turkish Republic has pursued a policy of integration with Western institutions. Turkey has been part of the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1981, and the EEC became the European Union in 1993. Therefore, it was not surprising that Turkey asked to join the European Union.

The Association Agreement of 1963 resulted from this accession request. Article 28 of this Agreement envisaged that Turkey would one day join the Community. The ties that link Turkey and the EU have continued to grow. From an economic point of view, traditionally, the EU is our major trade partner and investor. The words of the EU Commissioner, Turkey has the potential to absorb the products of the European Union, have a high absorption capacity when compared to other candidate countries. I would like to underline this point to express my confidence in the dynamism of the Turkish economy. With the successful economic reforms of the recent years, we achieved stability, growth and confidence. We are determined and confident that by the time of EU membership, Turkey's economy will grow strong enough to be a source of dynamism to the EU.

Another aspect of Turkish economic presence is the Turkish businessmen in Europe. With more than 80 thousand businesses of their own, Turkish businessmen in the EU are already creating jobs for tens of thousands of people. Turkish businessmen have proven themselves in several other markets. They will have a much broader job-creation potential with Turkey's full membership.

On the other hand, geography has placed Turkey at the crossroads of current and future energy, transportation and communication networks that link the EU to the East and vice versa.

On the geo-political front, during this period Turkey expanded its cultural, political and trade relations with the Balkan, Black Sea and Caucasian countries. Today, Russia is one of our largest trade partners.

Thanks to our existing linguistic and cultural ties with the Central Asian Republics, we have easy access to the region. In the Middle East, Turkey is a country in which both the Israelis and the Palestinians place their trust. My Government had initiated a neighbours forum to support the settlement of the problems in Iraq. This forum proved to be an asset in the efforts to establish a peaceful Iraq. UN Secretary General appreciated and contributed to this initiative. Finally, last week this forum came together with the G-8 countries, EU, OIC and Arab League to help secure the political process in Iraq.

We continue to encourage reform and transformation for political and economic development in the Middle East. Turkey is a capable actor in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

We have gained experience in peacekeeping operations including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, the Middle East and Georgia. We took over the command of ISAF II in Afghanistan and successfully carried out this difficult task. We will assume this mission once again in February next year. All of these issues and regions are of priority for the EU as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Today, ethnic, cultural and religious prejudices are unfortunately more widespread than ever before. These are both fed by and generate political and social-economic problems like migration, poverty, organized crime and terrorism. The important task of overcoming these obstacles is both a common challenge we face together.
To this end, one of our objectives should be to bridge the differences of all kinds through solidarity, understanding, dialogue and harmony. In this context, the EU, as a community of values and a union of cultural, ethnic and religious communities, has proven its value.

Turkey-EU relations and the course they will take in the coming months will have important implications for regional and global security.

The EU should be a progressive force, able to deliver policy objectives on a global scale. We have always believed that enlargement will serve this purpose.

In that sense, I am happy to see that, the European statesmen, politicians, intellectuals and businessmen with a global vision, look at Turkey’s goal of integration with Europe through the perspective of demical interests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The internal dynamics of my country have always been ready and quick in adapting to new conditions. This is particularly relevant to the EU which is itself a grand project of transformation. In the recent years, we have recorded tremendous progress in meeting EU standards in many areas.

The Turkish Parliament, upon the proposal of My Government, adopted eight political reform packages. These were designed to further upgrade our already modern standards of democracy to the EU norms and acquis.

Thus, the fundamental rights, among them the freedom of expression, the right to association and peaceful assembly, cultural and religious rights were further consolidated. The civilian nature of our democracy and civil society was reinforced. We have enhanced anti-corruption laws and have become party to the basic conventions in the field. Laws and bylaws on accountability of civil servants and transparency in administration have been adopted. An action plan has been devised for a pure, de-centralized and streamlined public administration.

The right to information Act was put into force, providing a comprehensive framework for public transparency.

All these far-reaching changes have been reflected in the Commission’s report and recommendations published on October 6th. In the words of the EU officials, we have realized a “silent revolution”. Accordingly, the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations.

This a development of historic significance.

Our efforts to further improve our standards and implementation will continue in the future. We see this as a continuous task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the December European Council draws near, the issue of Turkey’s accession has generated a public debate in some EU countries. I find such a debate natural and useful.

However, it is unfortunate that this debate is mostly focused on Turkey’s “full” membership although we are yet at a very early stage.

In that sense, we must not lose sight of the true meaning of the April 16th referendum on December 27th. If the negotiations are started, we shall open a new phase in our relations that will extend over years. Turkey’s performance in this phase will tell.

When we imagine Turkey as a member of the EU, we need to reflect on a different frame of reference than that of today.

We should think of the point where Turkey will have met all requirements for membership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In about six weeks from now, the EU will be making an important decision on Turkey. In this connection, I believe it is important to note that the fact that Turkey’s process of accession has never been a zero-sum game.

Turkey, the EU and all its individual Member States stand to gain from our full membership as the impact study prepared by the Commission indicates. And this is a major factor that has so far bound us and will continue to bind Turkey and the EU together.

I would like to respond those who propose that Turkey gets a membership perspective but a “special partner” status. Let us not forget that Turkey already has extensive and special relations with the EU.

Our Customs Union is functioning for eight years now. Efforts are already underway to deepen it. Means of cooperation in ESPO structures have been established.

The pre-accession strategy is fully operational with intensive political and macro-economic dialogue and financial cooperation.

Talks are ongoing on the liberalization of services and public procurement. In short, there can be no substitute for a future full membership.

The suggestion of a special status carries the risk of changing the perspectives of future for all the parties and therefore are unacceptable.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our expectation that the EU Summit will take a clear and unconditional decision next month to start the accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005 without delay.

It is of utmost importance that this decision be fair, equitable and objective.

It would be most unfortunate, if short-term concerns or domestic policy issues of individual member states are permitted to shadow or undermine such a great project related to the future of all of us.

It is also essential that the Summit decision should not contradict the principles the EU is based upon.

To make the accession negotiation process sustainable and predictable is a priority for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Slovenia and Turkey are two countries pursuing a common European vocation.
We share the same goals on many foreign policy issues. We consider Slovenia an important partner in the region, with its long cultural and industrial tradition, its geographic position as a gateway to Central and Eastern Europe, and established communication and transport infrastructures.

I believe that we should enhance our bilateral cooperation to extend effectively beyond our own countries, particularly in the economic revitalization of Southeastern Europe.

Turkey's close ties with the Caucasus and Central Asian countries can also provide new avenues of cooperation. Slovenian companies can benefit from the opportunities that facilitated access to these regions offer.

We believe that Slovenia, like us, recognizes that further new avenues for cooperation to serve our mutual interests will unfold before us, as Turkey is given a strong perspective for accession.

Thank you for your attention.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ABDULLAH Gül