

Address
by Under-Secretary of State at the MFA, Mr Stanisław Komorowski,
at the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership:
“The Wider Black Sea Region in the European and Global Context”
Bucharest, June 5 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland welcomes the idea of establishing the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership as an instrument reinforcing regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea region, addressed not only to state structures but also to business circles and the civil society. The area adjoining the Black Sea is increasingly attracting international attention due to the momentum of the democratic and political changes on the continent, which constitute an organic continuation of transformations in post-communist Europe, initiated at the beginning of the past decade. This region, stretching from the Adriatic to the Caspian Sea, is emerging as a bridge connecting Europe with Central Asia and the Middle East. In this context, the need for closer cooperation between states in the region, aimed at enhancing stabilization and security on a European and global level, is assuming even greater importance.

The social and political transformations in this area have crucial impact on the construction of the new European architecture based on the triad of values being at the very root of integration – i.e. democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In consequence, we are witnessing the creation of a new quality in post-war Europe: unity of the continent, based on the recognition of the same values by all the European states. After half a century of enforced division and subjugation of a part of Europe by totalitarianism, at last we have an opportunity to achieve a historic turning point in the fates of the continent. We are seeking a Europe free of divisions, free of violations of human rights and free of conflicts.

The “color” revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia marked a key development in that new upsurge of democratic, free-market changes. Their effects have been felt in neighboring areas, stimulating integration yearnings in post-Soviet states and good-neighborly regional cooperation.

The last enlargement of NATO and the European Union has undoubtedly significantly enhanced these democratic trends. It has demonstrated that the idea of European unity is realistic and that European solidarity is not an empty slogan. The experiences of the new member states, which have traveled the road from communism to democracy, proves that the prospect of integration with

European and Euroatlantic structures is a powerful engine of democratic and free-market change in the candidate countries. On the other hand, enlargement has lent a new dimension to the cooperation already under way. If it is true that integration results in growth of stability and prosperity, then it is equally true that all the actors involved stand to benefit. And that is why we support all pro-democracy and free-market transformations, which should eradicate the remaining divisions in Europe.

The experiences of Poland and other states of Central-Eastern Europe in their integration with NATO and the EU convincingly manifest the viability of such forms of regional cooperation as the Visegrad Group, the Central European Initiative and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. They have substantially facilitated the process of essential reforms and adjustments. The experiences of the more advanced partners could thus be conveniently shared. In this connection, we commend the significant achievements in deepening the cooperation between states in the Black Sea region.

Poland is ready to boost its engagement in the Black Sea area. We recognize the important role of the Democratic Choice Community as a platform for dialogue devoted to the promotion of democratic values, regional cooperation and human rights. The last summit of Baltic and Black Sea states in Vilnius highlighted the need for a global-dimension debate on the problems of the region. We hope that the present Forum will initiate a new quality of deeper collaboration and open dialogue between the states of the region.

We also welcome the effects of the last GUAM summit in Kiev, and in particular – the transformation of that structure into a new international organization. We hope it will usher in a new stage of effective collaboration between the four GUAM members.

Mutual diversity enhances closer cooperation, as shown by the broad network of regional partnerships and structures of decentralized collaboration. I would like to note here that Poland has long been developing decentralized trans-frontier cooperation with all its neighbors. That has produced fifteen dynamic Euro-regions and numerous partnerships at the level of towns, communes and provinces. Drawing on our rich experience, we are ready to provide expert support in the development of trans-frontier cooperation in the region, particularly in view of the initiative to establish the Black Sea Euro-Region.

It is evident that the wider Black Sea region has important assets and a high momentum of development. At the same time, it is hindered by various risk factors, constraining its integration. These include the so-called frozen conflicts, which have long lost their destructive fury but which are preventing the final

closure of the chapter of strife and war. Then, there are the insecure state borders, facilitating the spread of crime, illegal migration and terrorist infiltration of the European continent.

The elites of nations once locked in combat should today feel obliged to work for mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for religious and ethnic differences, eradication of violence, nationalism and separatism. Poland encourages bold solutions aimed at settling the frozen conflicts. Due advantage should be taken of the offer made by Javier Solana at the May conference in Vilnius, who pledged the European Union's help in negotiating solutions to the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Moldova and Georgia. On its part, Poland is prepared to assist such efforts.

Upon the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, the Union will reach the shores of the Black Sea. The guaranteeing of stability in its immediate neighborhood will thus become a key task, particularly in the context of such threats as illegal migration, trafficking in drugs and human beings, and organized crime. We believe that the EU and NATO are capable of developing effective instruments for ensuring stability in the region. The emerging eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy, containing EU concepts, instruments and actions addressed to Eastern Europe, is having positive effect on the approximation of states in the region with the EU, enhancing cooperation with them and facilitating the solution of local problems.

NATO and the EU must make an adequate response to the political changes in the post-Soviet space and the declarations by Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to seek integration with Euroatlantic and European structures. We believe that both the NATO open-doors policy and solidarity, as the foundation of European integration since its outset, should be incorporated in diverse formulas of assistance granted to those states.

Before concluding, let me point out one more significant aspect of the Polish engagement in the Black Sea region. Since the beginning of the political and economic reforms launched in 1989, Poland – similarly to other states of Central-Eastern Europe – has received substantial support for its systemic transformations, and has benefited from external aid. And now, it is Poland that has opened itself to the needs of other states, particularly those where our experience and assistance can have a positive impact. Thus, it is an integral part of Polish official development assistance to support international cooperation aimed at building and consolidating democracy and the civil society.

Poland feels particularly close to countries in the Black Sea region because of the similarity of our experiences in implementing systemic reforms. Three of

them, that is Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, are among the priority recipients of Polish development aid. Poland wants to support those countries, particularly in upgrading their government administration capacities, economic transformations and integration with European structures, as well as in all other areas where Polish expertise can be useful.

In conclusion I want to convey my sincere appreciation to the hosts of this meeting for the hospitality we have enjoyed in Bucharest, and to express the hope that the initiative of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership bears the fruit that we all expect.