

Mikheil SAAKASHVILI, President of Georgia

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia at the  
Summit of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership  
Bucharest, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

***Introduction***

- Let me begin by thanking our hosts for putting together this unique event – and to all the guests that have traveled here from across Europe and North America – representing governments, think tanks, international organizations and academia.
- The fact that we are such a diverse group – I think says a great deal about how many different interests are at stake here in the Black Sea region...
- ...and about just how much there is in common that draws us together.
- In particular, I would like to extend my gratitude to my good friend president Basescu for his invitation – and for his personal leadership and vision.
- As we all know, there exist a number of different forums that in one manner or another deal with issues affecting the Black Sea region...
- ...but as president Basescu's vision underlines – there is not one single overarching framework, uniting all the interested parties and issues – and in this respect, the Black Sea Forum is a very welcome step forward...
- ....and a necessary one...
- ....and my government – and I personally - welcome and support this important initiative.

***Shared interests and common legacy***

- The Black Sea basin has for thousands of years been home to some of our most ancient traditions, to our shared history – and most important of all, to our shared European identity.
- It is true that during the soviet period – this area, and many of the states that call it their home – were cut off from the rest of Europe.
- but that temporary division did not change the fundamental fact that the Black Sea forms part of the core of Europe – and I would argue that now more than ever...
- ...as this Forum demonstrates its importance, across a range of issues is and will continue to grow.
- If we consider the region's tremendous economic potential – not simply as a source of transit and exchange between west and east – but also as a region that is home to more than 200 million people – its importance is hard to over-state.

- When we consider the remarkable political changes that have occurred in our region – and the spread of democratic values and practices – it is clear that the Black Sea is tremendously influential.
- Indeed, I believe the Black Sea stands at the forefront of Europe’s future – representing a dynamic area that through greater cooperation and integration – can address – and solve - some of the most important – and complex challenges of our time.
- And here I would like to reiterate that I believe many of these challenges are shared ones – that affect our common future – and as such call for greater regional dialogue, cooperation and engagement.
- With and between all parties – at the level of states – between non governmental organizations, through commercial partnerships – and perhaps most importantly, by creating stronger and more regular ties between our peoples.
- Engagement of the sort proposed by this forum will help us more effectively fight terrorism...
- ...deal with illegal migration...
- ...combat trafficking and smuggling in all its forms.
- I am also thinking of multi-national projects that will bring greater energy security to Europe – and help increase market forces and investment so that all parties along the value chain – be they producers – transiters – or consumers will benefit.
- Our mission also means confronting difficult situations – and here I am thinking of the challenges associated with solving separatist conflicts in the region – where threats that emerge from these areas now affect the future of us all.
- And it means creating new jobs and new wealth based on the enormous resources and potential we possess.

### ***From concept to real cooperation***

- Certainly it is easy to talk about these issues and even agree on how important they are.
- It is another matter however to go about addressing them, and confronting them.
- I believe – as the organizers of this Forum have rightly stated - that good governance, based on open societies, rule of law, respect for human rights – and democratic practices, is the best way to advance our agenda.
- And when it is these values that unite us, I am sure the Black Sea area can play a key role as a **regional unifier**, fulfilling its historic mission to once again become a reliable and lasting anchor for European stability and prosperity.
- As a Black Sea nation, Georgia is committed to enhancing the diverse network proposed by this forum...
- ...one that agrees to promote and cooperate – rather than divide and compete.
- for that, we will need practicality – and we also will need principles.

### ***Conclusion***

- Today in the Black Sea region we have a common point of departure – which is our shared history and common identity.
- We also have a shared set of interests – defined by the broad range of inter-connected issues being debated today.
- What is lacking is a comprehensive framework – where differences can be aired, where policies can be formulated – and where solutions can be found that change, and improve our region...because they come from and are owned by the peoples of our region.
- It is my hope that this Forum can respond to these challenges – and is my intention, and that of my government to do what we can, in the spirit of partnership and cooperation to make this happen.

**Thank you**