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OPENING ADDRESS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have accepted the invitation to open this “European” symposium today in Dubrovnik, the “Croatian Athens”, with great pleasure. We are in a town which represents Croatia in Europe where every stone bears witness to the centuries-old links between Croatia and Europe. Allow me therefore to say a few words of introduction.

With its culture, history and civilization, Croatia has always belonged to the “circle of European states”, in the full literal meaning of this term. However, history, during which Croats were never asked what they wanted, has left indelible marks. Today we are one of the transitional, post-communist, “young” democracies, still not integrated into the leading European structures, among which the European Union is especially prominent.

It is important to note that the current European and world trends include integration and globalization, but also include regionalism within an articulate coherent structure.

Globalization, which ultimately necessitates a call for stronger integration, is a process of the future. It is also an essential factor in overall prospective harmonious development, regardless of all the problems its side effects bring. This is the reason why, today, we are all advocating globalization in a positive sense. However, a misconception of the term globalization may be a starting point for fundamental misunderstandings. Unification should not necessarily be the basic substance of globalization. Globalization *per se* should rather contain a well-balanced and harmonized spectrum of differences stemming from the overall cultural, sociological and other heritage of different existing societies and their models that could be applied equally regardless of borders in a broad sense.

Croatia is often used as an example of a country in transition, which has strong – within the framework of Europe, “surpassed” national awareness. Is it truly differ-

ent elsewhere? When the eleven European Union member countries established the monetary union, they transferred monetary sovereignty to the European Central Bank, but none of them fully waived their national identity. They forged their own symbols on the reverse side of all eight coins. Even today, the so-called “common policies” are in fact – a realistic compromise.

Therefore, when we talk about closer ties between nations, it is necessary to identify those forms of cooperation that have been developed through broader values and goals, shared by everybody, which take into account the values, customs and experiences of each of them.

This is especially important for Europe as a whole, which today is still far from a conflict-free homogenous zone. Ten years after the fall of communism, the continent continues to be divided, although this division is no longer along different ideological models of society but along significant development differences between the East and the West. Moreover, what causes additional concern is the fact that there are no indications of a decrease in this gap in the near future, not even on the verge of a new millennium. The outcome could be the formation of a new separation line on the continent. This still can be and must be avoided by joint efforts of the European Union and the states in transition. Division can be avoided, by expanding the European Union eastward, which would include not only the candidate states of the first and second group, but also those states, which have not lagged behind in any way, like Croatia, but still have not received an invitation to institutionalize their relations due to political and petty-political reasons.

Only an integration which respects the whole range of different cultures and which is sensitive to history and differences will foster trust and respect among the small states and big powers.

We can expect to reach a lasting consensus, as we have learned from the experience of “Europe at War”, only if the vital interests of all the sides are taken into account and harmonized with global interests in the spirit of tolerance and true fairness. Such fairness is the only correct basis of any lasting mutual relationship, where “mutual relationship” is the key concept. A mutual relationship assumes a bilateral activity, and, most of all, equally strong activity by both sides in finding a unique mutually acceptable solution. A solution in which only one side is favored necessarily leads to processes of lasting instability and disintegration, examples of which we have seen in the disappearance of multi-ethnic artificial state formations.

A transitory period is indispensable in the case of a more serious expansion of the European Union eastward because the process of transition does not just assume democratization, privatization and civil society only. It also assumes a new industrialization and urbanization as a whole of a technical society. Thus, the creation of a modern state is concordant with the prevailing trends of the developed world, in all its segments, and a prerequisite of every successful integration into a more developed environment, such as the European Union. However, it should be emphasized that it is very difficult to meet that condition in the absence of technical assistance provided by the European Union and its member states. I would like to point out that so far Croatia has been deprived of such assistance. The Phare program was interrupted before its implementation, while negotiations on the Agreement on Trade and Cooperation were unilaterally suspended by the European Union. This happened immediately after the military-police actions: "Flash" and "Storm" in the summer of 1995. During these actions, Croatia liberated the occupied parts of its territory and in this way facilitated peace and stability in this part of Europe. Multi-layered frustrations, i.e., the negative psycho-social experiences of what was done, and especially of what was not done in relation to the citizens of Croatia between 1990-1992, even today, seven years later, obstruct the success and the pace of the overall process of integration into Europe.

The big gap between our own perceptions regarding the position of our country and its position as seen from the perspective of the European West is a cause of deep frustration among the majority of Croats. In its efforts to improve the position of the country, Croatia's main task is to bridge this gap.

Following the criteria of self-imposed quasi-associated membership, the Croatian Government and Croatian experts have, on their own, and within a year, developed the European Integration Plan of Action, which was presented to the European Commission in Brussels and subsequently achieved significant success. The Plan is an outline of further activities in future developments of the Strategy of Integration Activities and as such really deserves special attention.

However, we all sometimes forget that Europe, including the European Union, is made up of people organized in states, and not only of states *per se*. This is precisely why the issue of European identity imposes itself as well as the meaning of the term "European". Geography defined it long ago. Politics uses it, according to its needs, as it

pleases at any given moment. In addition, we have frequently witnessed how no distinction is made between “Europe” and the “European Union”. This is impermissible, although we must admit that the creation of such an integration has in many aspects marked the last decade of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, the term “European” should primarily be defined as a geographical and cultural notion. From this standpoint, Croatia and the Croatian people should not have any problems with claiming their right to call themselves European, nor with being perceived as such by others.

Since Europe is made up of people with articulate models of conduct, that have been organized throughout history into national states, we must be aware, although this is unwillingly admitted, the majority of the population in European Union member countries declare themselves primarily on a national basis. Namely, they identify themselves as Finns, Germans, English, Austrians... and only subsequently as Europeans. Why is this so? This most likely stems from the fact that “European” is a collective term for the entire population of Europe as a continent while the national name is the *differentia specifica*, which makes it recognizable. Due to its old, but still existent cultural heritage and identity inherited throughout history, a quick Americanization of Europe in this sense cannot be expected. However, isn't the beauty of Europe truly reflected precisely in its diversity? It certainly is, otherwise the European Union would not insist on the “Europe of regions”. One also has to keep in mind that regionalism is only a sub-class of national identity, hence these two terms are not mutually exclusive.

In the new European democracies which emerged from multiethnic and totalitarian artificial state formations, national awareness, presented in the past exclusively as multiculturalism, is stronger than in those states that were nationally freely formed throughout history. Undoubtedly, there are examples in those states of unwilling full immersion of their own being into a uniform whole which has not yet succeeded to develop its own identity (Denmark, Great Britain).

The development of a new European identity encompassing all the nations which belong to it on the basis of cultural, sociological and historic foundations, and its recognizability in the future is one of the biggest tasks of Europe as a whole. Only then will it become evident that it is impossible for “black holes” to survive on the continent. Transparency and tolerance will play an important

role in this entire process. Transparency means the absence of games behind the scenes when deciding on behalf of others, and tolerance assumes sensitivity to the needs of others. The history of this town, Dubrovnik demonstrates this in the best possible manner.

The European Union, as a leading factor of everything that is progressive on the continent today, is faced with a historical task - to find strength and determination for the reintegration of all the parts of the continent. This can be achieved by expanding eastward, without excluding anybody in this expansion, keeping in mind that Europe is the common home of all those who live in it.

This is precisely why I would like to express the belief that in the near future the old Croatian people and the young Croatian state will have their place in a united Europe, to the mutual benefit of the European Union and Croatia. With these words I would like to thank you for your attention, wishing you pleasant and fruitful work on your reflections on European integration in the 21st century, and I proclaim the symposium "European Integration for the 21st century" open.