
Mladen
ANDRLIĆ

Ambassador
Director of the Diplomatic Academy
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Croatia

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Madam Deputy Prime Minister,
Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor and privilege to be here today and to greet this distinguished gathering on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mate Granić.

It seems to be significant that we have gathered here today, at the end of one and beginning of another millennium, in the city of Dubrovnik where there is so much international history and where the roots of Croatian diplomacy can be found. It needs to be emphasized that this part of the world where Croatia is situated was acknowledged as a part of Western civilization as long as three centuries ago. Specifically, the Republic of Dubrovnik was recognized as a part of the Western Mediterranean in a written document issued by the French court in 1760, which was a highly privileged status at that time. Although this international orientation has been modified since then, it has been a constant throughout Croatian history right up to until the eve of the year 2000.

In the context of the "Four-I-Concept" of internationalization, integration, individualization and informatics, which has prevailed in the last decade of this century or even millennium, Croatia has represented itself as a reliable player and a solid partner that has strived toward the Euro-Atlantic integration structures. Croatia will definitely become a full partner in the forthcoming years. The process of European integration is obviously the only viable process as it contains a number of wide multidisciplinary approaches where unification of all partners as well as recognition of their individual characteristics is their goal. All of Europe can only become stable and prosperous and a part of a wider globalized world through integration and decentralization of particular states.

The tectonic changes in the geostrategic matrix of Europe which started with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the dissolution of multinational states such as the former Czechoslovakia, former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the former Soviet Union, have changed priorities for both Western and Eastern countries. It is often seen as a paradox that, on one hand, there is integration and on the other disintegration.

However, the key issue here is that associations should develop gradually out of the free will and interest of each people. This is also a very important feature of the Stability Pact for the Southeast of Europe, which is best illustrated by the fact that the involved countries are not only from Southeastern Europe, but encompass a much wider area. The primary reason behind this is that it is in the interest of all of Europe and the world to be peaceful and prosperous, while stability is seen as a vital prerequisite for reaching this common goal.

With the end of the Cold War and a bipolar world, the predominance of democratization and integration has become of utmost importance. However, as such changes cannot be, unfortunately always peaceful, the traditional roles of institutions have been questioned and put on trial. It is essential that in such circumstances where the number of players has been drastically increased, that institutions such as the European Union and NATO, find reliable partners who will be factors of stability and contribute to both regional and world peace and prosperity.

The Republic of Croatia underwent a fundamental transformation in the first free democratic elections in 1990 and subsequently became a pluralist multi-party democracy and a free market oriented society. Unfortunately, in contrast to other Central European countries it has not followed a peaceful transition pattern. The institutions of civil society, although established, have been hindered in their full development by the complicated geostrategic position of Croatia. Namely, Croatia was not only exposed to a war of aggression on its own territory, but also had to help establish conditions for the overall stability of the region, playing an important part in the Dayton Peace Accords. It was only on January 15, 1998, that the real peacetime development of Croatia was inaugurated, including its foreign policy, creating conditions for more intensive activities aimed toward Euro-Atlantic integration processes.

Nevertheless, in today's increasingly globalized world, the real challenge is integration and cooperation. With its

Central European, Mediterranean and Danubian geostrategic position as well as its orientation and commitment toward Euro-Atlantic integration structures, Croatia has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness and readiness to be an active actor in all the stabilizing processes in Europe. In pursuit of further democratization, rule of law, human and minority rights, as well as transparency, openness, stability and cooperation, including a credible and consistent foreign policy, Croatia is aware that this is the only way to contribute to a more prosperous development that offers an even more solid foundation for a better future to its citizens.

The seriousness with which we approach these processes can be also seen in the way Croatia has taken full responsibility for its own democratic development. Precisely, only as integrated, rich in differences and united in purpose, can Europe assure Croatia's future as well as become a part of the wider globalized world. Conferences such as this one reflect common interests and goals, and at the same time contribute to confidence building, cross-cultural understanding and professional and personal networking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Director of the Diplomatic Academy of the Croatian Foreign Ministry let me conclude by saying that in cooperation with the International Center of Croatian Universities of Dubrovnik, the Diplomatic Academy has already organized a number of successful conferences. Participants have come from home and abroad, some of whom are here with us today. As distinguished guests, they have dealt with various topics on diplomacy and diplomatic training and we shall continue in this direction.

This conference entitled "European Integration for the Twenty-First Century" will also be yet another impetus for the Diplomatic Academy to incorporate all of these interesting ideas so that they can be propounded in its own agenda. This will contribute to a better understanding, stability, transparency and prosperity of all of Europe, but also in positioning Croatia as a part of the overall process of confidence building, globalization and European integration.

Thank you.