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Address of the President at the meeting with the Diplomatic Corps

*Excellency, Most Reverend Sir,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers of the Sejm and the Senate,
Distinguished Ministers,
Presidents,
All Distinguished Guests,*



I wish to thank the Most Reverend Nuncio for the good wishes and the gracious and kind words about Poland. I also thank Your Excellency for sharing with us a reflection about the maladies of contemporary world. I personally subscribe and I think we all subscribe to many concerns and preoccupations expressed in the address of the Most Reverend Nuncio.

That being said, we nonetheless see and experience development and progress in their many manifestations, and this gives us all grounds to be optimistic about the direction in which the world and each of our states and home countries are developing. We know that contemporary world needs more confidence, more will to take a concerted action for the common weal, seen from a global perspective.

2011 was a good year for Poland. This was a year of demanding tests and challenges which, as I believe, we as a state and nation managed to address. Thus, we are in favour of further strengthening of the groundwork on which the overall progress of civilization in Poland is based, in favour of openness in external relations, and friendly relations with our neighbours and with other nations of the world. We feel that there is less apprehension today and more self-assurance in place in Poland, more optimism about the prospects of the future.

October's parliamentary elections have confirmed political stability of our country and the ability to take concerted action for the common weal, and this in spite of dispute which is only natural in a democracy. The Government appointed as a result of those elections received a political mandate to carry out reforms needed to uphold Poland's development in a longer run. We are pleased about Poland's current economic results: the GDP growth of more than 3.5 % in 2011 and good economic projections for 2012. We are pleased in spite of the anxiety about our external situation, and more specifically the situation in Eurozone, which does not give grounds for full optimism. In Poland, we are trying to maintain our optimistic attitude, driven by the conviction that we know

what needs to be done in order to maintain economic growth.

Also positive evaluation of our Presidency of the Council of the European Union is a source of our satisfaction. While holding it, Poland sought to preserve stability and vitality of the European integration project. Poland wants a strong Europe, strong Community institutions and a harmonious cooperation of Member States. What the European Union needs is, in our view, more will to reach agreement, more courage in changing mechanisms but also more faith that this is a project which has an illustrious future in store for it.

During the Polish Presidency, names of prominent Polish women and men featured importantly in many countries. The fact has been also mentioned by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Most Reverend Nuncio. This why the music of Chopin and Szymanowski, the composers who were formed in Poland but worked for the benefit of the whole world, was accompanying our Presidency in various places in Europe. The year 2011 was also an International Year of Marie Skłodowska-Curie in commemoration of a great Polish scientist whose pioneering discoveries in the area of physics and chemistry paved the way in Europe to women's academic and scientific progress. Ignacy Jan Paderewski, a great pianist by whose portrait and piano you have passed on entering this room, in his inauguration speech as a Polish Prime Minister in the trying times soon after the First World War noted that it was not only warriors who fought for Poland but also "the knights of the word, colour and sounds, the champions of thought, science and knowledge".

The year 2011 will go down in the annals of history. This will be due to developments which have been termed "the Arab spring" world-wide. For us, Poles, they have been a reminder of man's unrelenting yearning for a life lived in dignity and for greater freedom, a reminder of aspirations shared by individuals and whole societies, concerning better living standards. For Poles, and especially the Solidarity-generation, these events were like a reminiscence of our Polish 1980 and then 1989. This is why the developments in North Africa evoked among us feelings of empathy and solidarity. In spite of frequently dramatic turns that those processes were taking, we are confident about their successful result and wish the nations of the whole region of North Africa and Middle East every success in the work which has been courageously undertaken.

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,*

For Polish diplomacy, the previous year was a year of an intense work featuring many important events in external relations. For me personally, this was also a year abundant in international contacts. Among other events, Poland hosted the Summit Meeting of the Weimar Triangle, the Summit of Presidents of Central European States, which was attended by twenty Heads of States from the region and United States President Barack Obama was the guest of honour. Poland also

played host to the Eastern Partnership Summit. The previous year afforded many opportunities for meetings and talks with Presidents, Prime Ministers, Members of Parliament, diplomats, representatives of international organizations, economic life, important think-tanks, and of NGO's dealing with various social problems. I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their input in our joint actions and for the cooperation we enjoyed.

I am grateful that so many people were willing to share with me and with Poland their observations and remarks pointing to the specific things that Poland could do in various areas of international life, also in its bilateral relations.

The experience of the last year heightens the awareness of the difficulties that we are facing as nations, regions and the entire international community. At the same time, the experience gathered suggests that future is in our hands and that if that the problems that beset us will be surmountable if we do not cease to work. To this end, it is necessary to reject the temptation of unilateralism, of nationalistic attitudes, and the logics juxtaposing "us" and "them" in a way in which the success of the one side is always at the expense of the other.

There is no other way to overcome antagonizing differences, difficulties in bilateral relations or problems regional or global than through dialogue, openness and frankness which build confidence and lead to a sound consensus.

For twenty years now, we have invariably seen progress in the good-neighbourly relations with states of our region. Poland knows how to forge relations between nations in a friendly fashion. I am happy to see the Polish ability to turn-around bilateral relations which were once conflict-ridden and full of dramatic experiences and were then transformed into relations based on openness and dialogue, exchange of goods and of thoughts, opening up such perspectives where a neighbour is going to be noticed and appreciated, where those with whom we have been living together in a neighbourhood for many centuries, are now well liked and valued.

In spite of various differences, we know how to foster our relations with neighbours. My manifold meetings with colleagues from Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary or the Baltic States corroborate the truth of the adage "united we stand". Therefore, we shall spare no effort to draw on those imposing transformations and attainments, and to add new impulses to the relations with our neighbours.

Distinguished Guests,

Owing to the efforts undertaken by the Presidency, we were able to demonstrate once again that the European integration means to us more than just a way to secure our own national agenda, that this is primarily a choice of civilization and of axiology.

The most fundamental task, short-term though strategically important, that the

European Union is facing is to stabilize the Eurozone, and also to consolidate the economic and monetary union in a way that will not bar the zone's economic growth in the years to come. Concurrently, this effort must not entail the weakening of the community nature of the EU. It would be but an irony of history if the community character of the EU which was framed by the founding fathers and founding states years ago would be now dismantled by the very same states due to mistakes committed by the governments of some member countries.

Poland will continue to be a firm advocate of a Union which is cohesive dynamic and open towards its neighbourhood, a Union involved in solving mankind's common problems. The EU must remain open to its neighbourhood and also to a perspective of gradual further enlargement. I share the profound conviction expressed by Benedict XVI and his blessed predecessor John Paul II, the Polish Pope who has been beatified, about the value that Europe represents and about its ability to revive, as well as the need for it to be open to the world, which allows Europe to share its best achievements with the whole humankind.

John Paul II often spoke about Europe's Eastern lung which should be combined with its Western part in such a way so as to allow Europe to be its true self in its entirety, rich in its civilisation experience and its diversity, its heritage, its human and natural resources. To my mind, this vision has been only accomplished in a seriously incomplete fashion.

Poland has made an endeavour for normalization and reconciliation with Russia. We saw it and continue to see it as our input in the effort to bring about reconciliation of nations in the whole Europe. My meeting with President Medvedev hosted in this Palace in December 2010 gave grounds to hope for progress in this process. I believe that further good and consistent effort on both sides to develop dialogue is possible, as well as an effort to bring the EU and Russia closer to each other. In co-shaping policies of the European Union and also in pursuing our bilateral relations with Russia we are interested in further development of our cooperation.

We count on a faster progress in bringing Ukraine closer to the EU and we remain convinced that obstacles which hamper the signing of the association agreement of Ukraine with the EU, the agreement which has been already negotiated, will be removed.

As neighbours, it pains us to see the blocking of democratic and European aspirations of the Belarus nation. We trust that freedom shall be restored to those who were deprived of it on political grounds.

*Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,*

Poland continues to be a staunch advocate of maintaining close allied relations

between Europe and the United States. We contribute to them bilaterally and also by means of cooperation within the North Atlantic Alliance. I am glad that the nearest NATO Summit in May this year will be held in Chicago, the city to which the incumbent President of the United States has special bonds, but which for us, Poles, is first and foremost the biggest centre of Poles and people of Polish descent living beyond our borders. I do hope that the NATO meeting hosted in Chicago will provide a good opportunity to reaffirm transatlantic bonds and the Alliance's role in stabilizing security in the entire Euro-Atlantic zone with the benefit to all states belonging to it. Of importance will be also effective pursuit of a political solution to the destructive conflict in Afghanistan which has been continuing for too long.

My recent visit to China has been yet another manifestation of Poland's effort to expand contacts with countries outside Europe. Our potential and our position in Europe make us, in my view, particularly destined to intensify relations with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Their work and achievements earn recognition and respect in Poland but, likewise, inspire great interest and a lot of sympathy. We have more and more to offer each other in economic, cultural and educational terms.

One of instruments of our presence in non-European countries is by offering aid with the view to enhancing stability and laying foundations for economic growth and self-sufficiency of those nations which suffered from conflicts and other misfortunes. Thus, we are trying to share with them both material resources as well as our unique experience in building a state governed by the rule of law, respect of human rights and featuring viable market economy.

Poland is invariably convinced about the value of human rights: seen from the perspective of individuals, bigger communities, especially national and religious minorities, and also from the perspective of just peace and sustainable growth. Hence the activities of the Secretariat of the Community of Democracies headquartered in Warsaw, hence also our endeavours to set up the European Fund for Democracy.

Poland will continue to be an active member of international organizations, those which promote international security, and contacts among states and people, also those which strengthen international law and respect of human rights, which lay down foundations for sustainable growth and resolve global problems: famine, exclusion, pandemics, finally those which combat threats to man's natural environment. We shall be active in those organizations: in the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the UN, and specialized agencies in the UN system. We shall support everything that serves humankind's common weal, that enhances dialogue, tolerance, non-discrimination, that reduces of the role of the military power in international life.

In the previous half of the year, Poland presided over the works of the Council of the European Union, whereas in the middle of this year together with Ukraine

we shall be hosting the European Football Championship, Euro 2012. The fact has been also mentioned by the Most Reverend Nuncio. For us it is indeed an important event. We would very much like to be able to live this event together with our friends and also with all football fans. We shall take care of everything but one: we cannot promise that everyone wins. That being said, we do hope that also by means of Euro 2012, we shall find a way to what unites people.

Most Reverend Archbishop Nuncio, Distinguished Guests, Dear Assembled Participants!

I wish all of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, your Families, your Nations all the prosperity for the year 2012 which is not going to be an easy one but nonetheless has also its beautiful and good perspective. May this year bring us all peace and wellbeing – this is my wish to all countries and to Poland as well. All the best!

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