

Check against delivery!

Artis BERTULIS, Ambassador of Latvia

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this distinguished audience, especially considering the incoming Italian and Latvian Presidencies of the Council of the European Union.

During our Trio Presidency, both our countries will have an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to achieve already defined priorities and to respond to the new challenges that might arise during that time.

One of the main focuses during the Italian semester will be on the institutional transition.

We should proceed in a well-balanced way. We have to be cautious with procedure since it is creating a precedent for the future.

The discussion on the priorities of the next legislative period should not be overshadowed by nominations for the EU highest posts. To me – the substance should prevail.

We are open to the debate on the EU future. But the debate ought to be pro and not con based.

By definition it has to be pro-European: with the focus on economic growth, security in wider sense and effective functioning of the EU.

Latvia is generally satisfied with the current division of competences between the EU and the Member States.

We should make a maximum use of the existing Treaties.

However, we are ready to support that in certain areas, where there is a clear need of EU action, we can move forward with the closer integration.

It is important to maintain a balance between greater integration and solidarity at the EU level and good governance at the national level. Both elements are important and cannot exist without each other.

The discussion on subsidiarity should not undermine or compromise the credibility of the EU institutions.

We support further involvement of national parliaments in the processes of the EU. It should be done within the framework of the existing Treaties.

We believe that it is important to strengthen the dialogue between the European Commission and national parliaments. The Commissioners could be invited to the national parliaments to hold discussions on relevant issues.

Latvia is fully committed towards a stronger and deeper integrated European Monetary Union, including an agreement on economic policy.

December 2013 European Council decision to further elaborate the elements for economic policy coordination until October has given us sufficient time to address the interests of all parties. However we think, that a cautious assessment of mutually agreed contracts for competitiveness and growth and associated solidarity mechanisms is necessary.

In our opinion, for further economic integration the following principles should be followed:

Firstly, national ownership of the reforms.

Secondly, EU level solidarity, if the reforms have an impact on the Eurozone member states stability and welfare.

And thirdly, member states have the ultimate decision regarding its national budgets.

We are looking forward to the October European Council and anticipate greater progress.

Dear Colleagues,

As a result of the wide range of measures adopted throughout the previous years, the economic stability in the EU and the Eurozone has increased.

Latvian economic performance over past two years has been exceptional and continues to improve. Of course, even though the financial conditions in general are stabilising in the EU, we have to continue to work on improvements in real economies.

Latvia introduced the euro this year. For us euro is the key driving force for change. The introduction has been positive both on macro and micro-end users' – level.

We are thankful to all the member states for their support during our accession to the euro. We are open to share the experience on technical preparations and provide necessary advice to the future members of the Eurozone.

Lithuania has Latvia's full support on its way to the euro introduction. We believe that further enlargement of the Eurozone with new, fiscally prudent Member States will benefit the whole Eurozone and strengthen the confidence in the euro. Eurozone enlargement will be another strong signal to investors that the Eurozone is set to expand and get stronger.

Let me conclude by quoting Latvian born philosopher Isaiah Berlin who once said that "Long runs are made of short runs– to ignore the latter is very foolish". I wish all the best for this conference and I wish all the best for the incoming Italian Presidency in their mid-distance run for the next 6 months.

Thank You!