

In a White House ceremony on January 16, 1998, the Presidents of the United States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed the U.S.-Baltic Charter of Partnership. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, we recall the document as a historic political landmark in the relations between our countries.

With this Charter we set up a framework for cooperation that has ultimately helped us achieve the strategic goal of stability and security through NATO membership. It significantly enhanced U.S.-Baltic cooperation in political, security, and economic areas.

The partnership based on common values and continuously maintained between the United States of America and the Baltic States since 1922 is an intrinsic part of Baltic independence. The Charter was a consistent continuation of the U.S. policy of non-recognition of the forceful incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union as well as of political and practical support to the restoration of our independence.

The Charter also highlighted the moral and strategic imperatives of real, profound, and enduring American engagement in Europe, making the Baltic States part of the irreplaceable transatlantic link that will always remain at the core of security and stability in Europe. Such stability also assisted the Baltic States to become the fastest growing economies in the European Union, and the United States remains among their most significant investors. We also do hope that the extension of the Visa Waiver Program to the proven friends of the United States in Europe will further the spirit of modern partnership between our countries and fulfil the vision of transatlantic alliance.

With the accession of the Baltic States to NATO in 2004, immediately followed by their accession to the European Union, the principal goals of the U.S.-Baltic Charter were accomplished. Nonetheless, the spirit of the U.S.-Baltic Charter lives on in the unchanged commitment of our four nations to the shared values of liberty, democracy, human rights, and free market as well as in our ongoing contribution to the NATO and U.S.-led coalition operations and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans.

The Charter continues to give us inspiration and a strong sense of responsibility for helping and supporting those who choose to embark on the path of democratic transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration. With this responsibility in mind, we support Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova

and other new democracies in their reform process and aspirations for future membership in the key institutions of the Western democratic community. The historic NATO Summit in Riga also testifies to the fundamental changes on the continent.

We feel proud that the U.S.-Baltic Charter has served as a model in setting up an analogous U.S.-Adriatic Partnership. And we look forward to the continued reform efforts of Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with a view to welcoming them to NATO in the very near future. Hopefully, the Charter may serve as a blueprint for a U.S.-Black Sea partnership and possibly other regional partnerships to accomplish our shared vision of Europe whole and free.

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