

Mr President,
Mrs Speaker,
Esteemed members of Parliament,
President Yuschenko,

It is a huge honour as President of Estonia to be invited to speak before the Parliament of Georgia, the thriving law-giving body that represents democracy and the rule of law, the *sine qua non* of European values, so rare, alas, among the countries that emerged from the prison of nations that was the Soviet Union.

I come to Georgia not for the first time, but for the first time as President of my country just a month after my election, to show my nation's solidarity with you. We may be separated by a great physical difference measured in kilometres but in our hearts, our minds and in our actions we stand side by side with the people of Georgia.

We know what it is like to be in your shoes. Our aspirations to rejoin Europe and NATO, which led us for nearly fifteen years to reform, reform and reform even more, are also your aspirations. We know what it means to turn a sovietized society and economy into a Western one. We know what it means to come under unfriendly pressure from those who don't want you to succeed, who want to go back to the state where rights and freedoms are proscribed, where you are not the master of your own land. We share your concern over the profoundly disturbing developments of recent years where your neighbor comes to see democracy on its borders as a security threat, and the lack of democracy as the model of stability.

And because we understand your concerns, we also understand your accomplishments. We are proud of the reforms you have undertaken that have produced such dramatic growth in your economy. We feel the same pride that your largest trading partner is the European Union. But we know too the difficulties one's country faces when its energy supply is cut off. We know what it means when your primary export market is artificially cut off. But we know too that with determination these difficulties become advantages. When Estonia was denied its primary export market, the former Soviet Union, it forced our companies to become more competitive, to strive for higher quality so that we could export to the more lucrative EU market. A policy designed to bring us to our knees backfired; instead we found ourselves standing taller than ever before.

We know all too well what it means when outsiders incite separatism on your territory, as was tried with us in 1992 and '93 in Northeast Estonia. But we know too, that patience, understanding and a rapidly growing economy can put an end to separatist rhetoric. And so effectively that some five-six years ago people living on the other side of our border who saw the progress of Estonia were gathering signatures because they wanted to join us.

Because we understand, because we stand at your side, Estonia also has offered its helping hand. We have helped computerize your parliament. We have sent our overwhelmingly

successful tigerleap experts to work with you on your deer's leap. We are proud to have Georgians studying in the military and police academies of Estonia, just as we are proud our officials work with you in your ministries.

I am thrilled that my friend Mart Laar, the former Prime Minister of Estonia and architect of so many of our reforms now spends almost half his time in Georgia working on yours.

I brought with me on my delegation Estonia's leading expert on EU trade relations to offer her expertise on EU-trade. She probably knows well what you are facing right now, for she spent years on the same difficult and complex issues you grapple with today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In NATO too, Georgia has a strong and committed friend in Estonia. We support your membership in that great organization; I just met with the NATO secretary General Jaap Hoop de Scheffer and urged him to include the strongest possible language on Georgia in the NATO final communique we shall adopt next week at the Riga Summit. Tuesday I shall meet President Bush in Tallinn and will urge him in the same terms.

Today, on the anniversary of the Rose revolution Estonia remains committed to Georgia and resoundingly rejects the idea that democracy can ever be a threat to anyone.

Forty five years ago the President of a large democracy, John F. Kennedy, came to an outpost of Freedom in Europe, Berlin, and showed his solidarity by saying *Ich bin ein Berliner*. Today the President of a small democracy comes to another outpost of Freedom and European values and says: We are with you. I am with you. And I feel that in this great hall of democracy I can say today

Me Qartveli var

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