

YEARBOOK

OF POLISH

FOREIGN POLICY

2011—2015



PISM

POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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From the Editor

The *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy 2011–2015* is the only volume describing five years of Polish foreign policy activity. Conventionally, the yearbook is published annually and discusses the past year. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, in 2012 the publication of the *Yearbook* was discontinued, which created a huge gap in reflection on Polish foreign policy. We decided to supplement it and make up for lost time, although not everything can be restored without any loss of precision in the method applied. It is also important to return to the tradition of the Polish Institute of International Affairs publishing the *Yearbook*.

This edition of the *Yearbook* offers analyses of Polish foreign policy in 15 areas. The authors are PISM analysts. A favourable circumstance in developing a five-year overview turned out to be that for almost the entire period, except the last few weeks, one government coalition was in power and, except for the last few months, one president. Therefore, neither the way policy was conducted nor the administration responsible for it fundamentally changed.

The challenge, however, also methodological, was that what at the beginning of the discussed period was a policy objective had become by the end of the cycle, after implementing the objectives, a determinant for further activities. Hence, there was the need to capture the change in these circumstances over time. However, the point of reference for the assessment of the effectiveness of Polish foreign policy in particular areas was the objectives formulated by the government and presented by the minister of foreign affairs in annual speeches in the Sejm as well as those included in the multiannual programmes.

The year 2011 was the first after Poland regained its sovereignty that the same liberal-conservative parties which had been governing continued after the parliamentary elections: Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO, 39.2% of the votes in the October elections) and the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL, 8.4%). The largest opposition group remained the conservative Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS, 29.9%), while parliament was complemented by two social democratic parties—Palikot's Movement (Ruch Palikota, 10%, transformed into Your Movement/Twój Ruch in 2013) and Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD, 8.2%).

In the second government of Donald Tusk, Radosław Sikorski remained minister of foreign affairs from November 2011 and Tomasz Siemoniak, who replaced Bogdan Klich in mid-2011, became the minister of national defence. In the government of Ewa Kopacz, which was formed in September 2014, the foreign minister was Grzegorz Schetyna. The PiS-led coalition of right-wing parties that

came to power in mid-November 2015 after winning the elections constitutes a caesura in this series and the authors of the articles merely signal the changes to come in politics before the end of the year.

The year 2011 was also the first year of conducting Polish foreign policy after the Smolensk catastrophe in which President Lech Kaczyński and 95 others perished. Bronisław Komorowski, who won in early elections as a candidate of the PO, held office until August 2015. Therefore, the years 2011–2015 in Polish politics are mainly a period of cooperation between the government and the president from the same political environment. Andrzej Duda election to office as president in 2015 turned out to be a sign of upcoming changes on the Polish political scene.

The beginning of 2011 coincided with unprecedented events in the immediate vicinity of Europe—North Africa and the Middle East. Revolutions in countries in these regions soon came to be called the “Arab Spring” and were aimed at overthrowing existing regimes. Ben Ali fled Tunisia. The government of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt collapsed. The international intervention in Libya led to the collapse of its leader, Muammar al-Gaddafi. The attempt to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad in Syria ended in civil war and international involvement. Poland could not remain indifferent to these events, nor as a country with experience in political transformation. It tried to share these experiences, among others, through the European Fund for Democracy, established on the Polish initiative.

The most significant events from the perspective of Polish foreign policy were those following the “Revolution of Dignity” in Ukraine. It broke out in November 2013 as a result of President Viktor Yanukovich’s withdrawal of Ukraine, under Russian pressure, from signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. His subsequent escape from the country after an attempt to brutally suppress peaceful demonstrations, followed by Russian aggression and occupation of Crimea and the creation of quasi-republics in the east of the country with the assistance of Russia, resulted in the non-standard involvement of the Polish president, the government, and the opposition in Ukrainian affairs. The war in Ukraine also resulted in unprecedented migration from this country to Poland, which soon reached several hundred thousand people and continued to grow.

Europe was also confronted with increased migration and refugee flows, mainly from the Middle East, from the end of 2014. The European mass-migration and refugee crisis peaked in 2015, when almost two million people entered Europe, mostly through irregular migration.

Poland’s security policy had to be adapted to, among other things, events from the East and South. It was dominated by a growing threat from Russia. Therefore, Poland’s primary goal was to increase NATO’s ability to defend its member states. At the summit in Wales in September 2014, the Alliance met these expectations

by adopting a “Preparedness Action Plan” aimed at increasing the Allied rapid response forces and shortening the time of their transfer to Central and Eastern Europe. The need to strengthen NATO forces in the region also meant that Poland was less eager to engage in the development of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The United States once again proved to be crucial for Europe’s security. The Allied forces in Central and Eastern Europe were increased mainly through bilateral U.S. initiatives. The funds for this purpose came from, among others, the Strengthening European Defence initiative with a budget of \$1 billion dollars, the allocation of which was announced on 4 June 2014 in Warsaw by President Barack Obama. His assurances about the strategic importance of the partnership between the U.S. and Poland for the security of Europe were translated into decisions on the deployment of American forces in Poland. Previously, Warsaw hosted President Obama at the Central and Eastern European Summit in 2011.

The beginning of 2011 found Poland preparing for the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of the year. At that time, Poland was convinced that the EU should not create barriers limiting integration because closer cooperation between the Member States determines economic growth and thus, the recovery from the economic crisis, of which a second wave was experienced by Europe in 2011. Poland built the priorities of the presidency around European integration as a source of growth, a secure Europe, and a Europe benefiting from openness.

Poland, from a newcomer to the EU became the co-host of events and co-author of new initiatives wishing to shape the activities of the EU and increase its influence on the decision-making process. The implementation of European policy was guided by the principle of “more, not less, Europe”. One of Poland’s fundamental achievements was the negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework with a more substantial amount of funds for cohesion policy than in the previous perspective. At the same time though, in 2011, the government adopted the “National Plan” for the introduction of the euro, though a year later it ceased to implement it, indicating, among other things, the need to stabilise the eurozone and to prepare Poland in macroeconomic and legal terms.

A historic event for Poland was the acceptance of the highest position in the EU by a Pole. In December 2014, Prime Minister Tusk became the President of the European Council for a two-and-a-half-year renewable term. Also, until the beginning of 2012 (from mid-2009), Jerzy Buzek was president of the European Parliament.

Poland wanted to strengthen its cooperation with the largest EU Member States, i.e., Germany and France. Poland and Germany were brought together by views on the direction of reforms in the eurozone and countering the economic crisis. The divergences concerned, among others, energy policy and relations with

Russia, and from 2015 also the issue of migration. Relations with France revived. Poland managed to revitalise trilateral cooperation within the Weimar Triangle and the years 2011–2015 were the best period of operation.

In the Visegrad Group, Poland strengthened its position as a leader and led its work from mid-2012 to mid-2013. After 2014, the V4's lack of consistency in its policy towards Russia and Ukraine became apparent, which was the source of Poland's disputes with Hungary. After the change of government in Poland in 2015, the new cabinet announced a strengthening of regional cooperation.

Unresolved disputes concerning the Polish minority made relations with Lithuania more difficult for Poland. The Russian aggression against Ukraine mobilised Poland to strengthen cooperation with the Baltic States in order to increase not only military but also energy security.

The Polish authorities increasingly recognised the need to engage in the integration of the Balkan States with the EU. Some activities were related to the presidency of the EU Council, such as Prime Minister Tusk's delivery of Croatia's accession treaty to Zagreb. However, the Polish activities within the EU resulted also in bilateral initiatives towards the region.

In order to support the development of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), which has been an essential instrument of the EU's Eastern policy since 2009, Poland organised a summit of this initiative in Warsaw in 2011. It was a focal point of the Polish presidency of the EU Council. In 2014, Association Agreements were signed between the EU and Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Poland did not succeed, however, in encouraging most Member States to open up membership opportunities for the EaP countries, not least because of their limited progress in reforms.

Poland co-created the EU's policy of sanctions against Russia after its aggression against Ukraine. Until then, Polish-Russian relations were dominated by the issue of returning the wreckage of the Tu-154M presidential aircraft. Centres for dialogue and understanding were initiated. Small border traffic agreements with the Kaliningrad region were introduced. Similar facilitation of contact with Belarus was blocked by that country's authorities.

The growing importance of China was recognised by Poland. The strategic partnership concluded in 2011 was to intensify and institutionalise the political dialogue. Poland hoped for an increase in exports to China and to attract high-quality Chinese investments. The Chinese 16+1 initiative with the participation of Poland was intended to strengthen cooperation.

This volume is a unique analysis of five years of Polish foreign policy. Subsequent volumes will contain separate studies for each year, in accordance with the concept of this publication. We welcome you to this edition of the *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy*.

I.

THE BASIS OF POLISH FOREIGN POLICY

Government Information on Polish Foreign Policy in 2011
(presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
Radosław Sikorski at a sitting of the Sejm on 16 March 2011)

Mr President! Mr Speaker! Mr Prime Minister! Members of the House! Distinguished Guests! Your Excellencies! Members of the Diplomatic Corps!

As I stand before the House to report on Polish foreign policy, I am aware that this is the first time in the history of the Third Polish Republic that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is giving an account of what is almost a full term in office, in a stable government and a harmonious coalition. I am honoured that, in keeping with tradition, the policy address is being heard by the President of the Republic of Poland and the leader of the main opposition party. May this be a good harbinger of the unity and stability of Polish foreign policy, and thus of its effectiveness.

The custom of the policy address was introduced by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ignacy Jan Paderewski. On 20 February 1919, Paderewski presented the state of Polish affairs as follows: “The rebirth of our Homeland began in darkness, blood and pain. [...] While the happier countries of the Entente have for three months been celebrating complete and utter triumph, we must continue to lead an armed fight to defend our Homeland’s borders.”

The twentieth century saw us rise from physical and political ruin twice more.

In taking stock of my time in office, I am grateful to those who came before me. Krzysztof Skubiszewski became Foreign Minister of a bankrupt country, a member of the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact. The Russian troops still stationed on our territory and our borders were unregulated by treaties. Our neighbours were changing all around us. He left a free Poland with stable relations in the region and en route to joining Euro-Atlantic institutions. Władysław Bartoszewski—the only twice serving Foreign Minister in the last 20 years—worked tirelessly to achieve Polish-German reconciliation. Andrzej Olechowski filed the official application for Poland’s membership of the EU, and it was under Dariusz Rosati that the doors to NATO membership negotiations opened for Poland. When the office of Foreign Minister was held by Bronisław Geremek, we joined the North Atlantic Alliance, and Poland became a member of the European Union under Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz. Adam Daniel Rotfeld supported the Orange Revolution in Ukraine; he is now assisting the uneasy process of reconciliation with Russia. Stefan Meller helped ensure that Poland received a generous share of the EU budget. When Anna Fotyga was Foreign Minister, Poland negotiated the Lisbon Treaty, later signed by Prime Minister Tusk’s cabinet.

Today, no one abroad questions Poland's status as a sovereign country. We have overcome the sinister legacy of the partitions and communism once and for all. We have rebuilt our state and made it part of the global democratic architecture. We are no longer perceived as a seasonal product of some treaty, but a necessary and desirable element of the international system. In recent years, we have also regained the freedom to formulate our own policy. We are no longer a petitioner, but a country that elects its position independently, albeit within the limits of European and NATO-wide solidarity. Those who deny this self-evident fact tarnish the legacy of generations of Poles who longed for the time when the Foreign Minister of a free Poland would report on his activities and plans before a democratically elected Parliament.

Ladies and Gentlemen! The global political situation continues to be propitious for Poland. We are an ever more important Western state, but our transatlantic family is no longer the be all and end all. Though we continue to enjoy increasing prosperity and have real defence capabilities, others are getting richer and arming themselves faster. Our Eurocentric world—which we have come to take for granted—is becoming a thing of the past. Every year, the population and economies of NATO member states—or, more broadly speaking, OSCE member states—represent a smaller share of the global population and economy. This trend has its political implications.

At least two questions arise: Will we be able to enlarge the group of countries that consider themselves heirs of the so-called Western world in order to retain our influence? Will we be able, at the very least, to integrate the new emerging powers into existing international institutions? We must look for ways to accommodate these countries' aspirations and thus ensure the international system continues to evolve without anyone resorting to war.

What is our recipe for foreign policy in the second decade of the 21st century? How to maximise our foreign policy's contribution to the success of our country and nation?

First and foremost, we must realistically assess our resources—be they intellectual, social, economic or military—vis-à-vis those of our rivals. We must establish the correlation of power.

Second, we must define our ultimate aim.

Third, we must determine how to run Polish foreign policy in these conditions, and establish which tasks we will undertake.

I do not emphasise realism in my assessment as a rejection of ideals, but rather to improve our chances of realising our aspirations. After all, prudence is a cardinal virtue.

The national interest is not a transcendental entity, but concrete. It was right to align our efforts to our goals in times of subjugation, when we had nothing to lose but our shackles. But the citizens of a free country must behave responsibly, as their descendants inherit their assets. We have moved from one situation to the other in the space of a single generation. It is high time we got used to freedom. Our duty is to calculate rationally, not to play with emotions.

All of us gathered here in the House consider ourselves patriots. To quote the historian Lord Acton, “Patriotism is in political life what faith is in religion.” However, tribal or sectarian hectoring must not be mistaken for patriotism. Each and every one of us has wondered where Poland would be now were it not for the dark times of the Partitions, the nightmare of the Second World War, and the enslavement of communism. We shall never forget those injustices, nor the heroes who stayed true to their Polish identity. It is thanks to them that today we do not have to limit ourselves to lifting spirits. However, responsible policy cannot be based on the mythology of martyrdom. The greatest patriot is not he who talks the most about patriotism, but he who really works to benefit Poland.

Nor does parading a misguided sense of honour elicit respect. When, during the First World War, a tsarist officer asked Wieniawa-Długoszowski what the Polish Legions were actually fighting for, the latter is said to have retorted: “You fight for honour, we fight for our freedom. That is each side is fighting for what it lacks.” Today, our country is fighting for its place on the international stage—not for honour, which no one can take away from us.

Historical resentment is not worth pursuing. Despite all the misfortunes that have befallen us, we now have a good basis from which to rebuild our position. The ever more prosperous Poland, which coexists peacefully with its neighbours, elicits respect and even envy abroad. To those who consider that the greatest expression of patriotism is to accuse a democratically elected government of servility to foreigners, condominium, re-Finlandisation, treason, and betrayal, I say: *Come to your senses!* And understand that today’s Poland—which is founded on democratic and free-market values, which we all sought in our own ways, where many wrongs are still unaccounted for, and which is still far from ideal—is the best Poland we have ever had. Learn to love it!

Members of the House! As we have learnt, confidence of being in the right does not guarantee success. To quote the Norwegian sociologist Stein Rokkan, “votes count, but resources decide.” Let us then evaluate our potential objectively, as is the habit in Germany, France, or Great Britain. Twenty years ago, our gross domestic product, in terms of purchasing power parity, was around USD 160 billion. Today, it is over USD 717 billion, or four and a half times greater. According to International Monetary Fund data, we have overtaken Belgium, Sweden, and

recently even the Netherlands. We are the 20th largest economy in the world, and the 6th largest in Europe. In my opinion, our GDP could grow by another USD 300 billion in this decade.

Our GDP amounts to one-third of Russia's, but is two-and-a-half times that of Ukraine, and thirteen times that of Lithuania. The German GDP, meanwhile—despite the heavier impact the crisis had there—is USD 3 trillion, or four times that of Poland. Spain, with a population similar to Poland's, boasts an economy twice the size of ours. Turkey also outweighs us in terms of potential, although its per capita income is smaller. Let us bear in mind that current revenues alone do not determine potential: accumulated wealth also counts. We still have a fair amount of catching up to do.

We are increasing our trade levels—Polish exports have exceeded 1990 levels ninefold, and they are still higher than they were before the crisis. Last year, they reached a record sum of USD 162 billion. Polish foreign direct investments are already at a level of USD 27 billion. This strengthens Poland's position in the countries in which these investments are made, in particular amongst our neighbours—Germany, Ukraine and Lithuania.

In 2010, for the first time in history, Poland was ranked as a very highly developed country in the Human Development Index. Our position in the global competition index has gone up 12 notches since 2007. Every other young Pole is in higher education. In terms of social cohesion, Poland comes close to developed states. We are perceived as a country that is fighting corruption effectively. In the 2010 Transparency International index, Poland advanced to 41st place out of 180 countries—the highest position in the Visegrad Group, when as recently as 2007 Poland ranked lower than Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

EU membership has made us stronger. EU Member States account for two-thirds of our trade. The EU Cohesion Policy, which includes vital infrastructure investments, has been included in the EU strategy for the coming decade.

We continue to lead in the spending of EU funds. We have received the most regional development assistance that the EU has granted since 2006. In the current Cohesion Policy budget, one in five euros disbursed by the Commission goes to Poland. Since 2007, we have spent over EUR 16 billion. We have managed to create an effective system that is used by corporate and institutional clients and private citizens alike. This translates into growing enterprises and new jobs. It is the result of Minister Elżbieta Bieńkowska's hard work. It also exemplifies the innovative approach of Polish entrepreneurs, local government authorities, officials and social activists, who have turned their project applications into ring roads, training for the unemployed, and cycle lanes. Minister Cezary Grabarczyk has built more roads than his five predecessors put together.

Let us remember, however, that Poland's role is not simply one of a passive recipient of aid. The EU benefits from our advice on relations with our eastern neighbours. We understand how to build regional cooperation and push through measures that benefit us, as was the case with negotiations on the climate and energy package. This is proof of our effectiveness.

Poles hold important positions in the EU. Jerzy Buzek is the President of the European Parliament. Janusz Lewandowski is responsible for one of the European Commission's most important tasks: the EU budget. Our diplomat at the European External Action Service holds a senior post. Polish citizens are the heads of EU delegations to Jordan and South Korea. Though we lost the chair of one of the European Parliament groups, Poles serve as NATO bureau chiefs in Moscow and Kiev, and direct the Alliance's structures in the Caucasus.

We have become an authority on economic matters in Europe. It was not by coincidence that Jacek Rostowski was voted best Finance Minister in Europe's emerging markets and, subsequently, the best Finance Minister in Europe, in recognition of his anti-crisis measures. Interest in the Polish capital market is growing. The capitalisation of the Warsaw Stock Exchange increases year on year: 14 years ago, it amounted to USD 13 billion; today, that figure stands at USD 180 billion. Warsaw is becoming the region's financial hub.

Twenty-one Polish Institutes operate abroad. Poland's dynamic development has inspired thousands of press articles and radio and television programmes. Chopin Year was a promotional success. Polish diplomatic missions organised over 3.5 thousand projects for over 5 million spectators all over the world. The Polish pavilion at the Shanghai Expo attracted 8 million visitors and, thanks to the media, it reached many more millions and become the international symbol of Poland. We are expecting an increase in tourism in connection with the upcoming European Football Championship.

How do others perceive Poland? Despite the occasional incidents that distort our history, Poland gets good press. "Horse power to horsepower," writes *The Economist*. *Der Spiegel* talks of an "uninterrupted blossoming" and characterises Poland as a "regional power." *Le Monde* calls us "Europe's top economic student." Gone for good are the days when Western newspapers printed photos of wooden carts drawn by gaunt mares. We have gone from a "poor cousin" to a soon-to-be member of the eurozone.

Poles are becoming more prosperous. Over 85% of our society recognises the positive impact of our EU membership. Our sense of security has increased. Our standard of living has improved. Poles are the most optimistic nation in Europe.

Members of the House! Having achieved what seemed almost beyond our reach in 1989, today we must set more audacious goals. I am confident that I speak

on behalf of all the members of this House when I say that we want Poland to become not only a secure and prosperous country, but also one with influence. A serious country. So that we, like Spain or Turkey before us, will be able to regain some of our bygone prestige.

A serious country is, in my opinion, one with an economy which—based on modern benchmarks—has a GDP of over a trillion dollars. It is a country that exports more capital and technology than it imports. Whose youth does not emigrate to find work, and whose opportunities attract at least its own diaspora. A country that may not be a nuclear power, but that can deter potential invaders. A country that does not react when provoked, but responds with actions. A country that can fight for the interests of its region. That grants development and humanitarian aid. That, in the international system, is regarded as a problem solver, not a source of problems. Finally, a country that does not wait for others to take a position, but is looked to for leadership. A model worthy of emulating. That is a goal that meets Polish ambitions.

What sort of foreign policy can be conducted in order to achieve this goal, here and now, with our current assets and liabilities, and in the current international environment?

The mission of the Foreign Ministry, as drafted in a statement by its staff, “is to pursue the interests of the Republic of Poland through European and global cooperation for security, democracy and development.” It is also expressed, more briefly, by our motto: “Serving Poland, building Europe, understanding the world.” Let us bear in mind that Solidarity succeeded because its leaders deliberately acted in line with the motto of the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk: “Nec temere, nec timide” —neither rashly nor timidly.

Ladies and Gentlemen! The upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU will provide a great opportunity for us to move closer to this goal. Napoleon Bonaparte once said that “a leader is a dealer in hope.” In these difficult times for the European project, Poland has ideas on how to breathe new life into many EU initiatives.

No one in the EU expects superhuman feats of us. What is expected, however, is that we be an advocate of the European interest, and an arbiter of national interests. The laws and decisions enacted during our Presidency are meant to benefit over 500 million EU citizens. We must demonstrate maturity and pragmatism. At times, we will seek Solomon solutions. We shall pursue our interest, but we shall not be self-interested. Our interest lies in strengthening Poland’s image as a stable and effective country. In consolidating our good brand.

Returning to the path of rapid and sustainable economic growth of the Union will be a priority. There are three ways of ensuring it. A deeper internal market: an

unobstructed flow of trade, services and workers will boost EU competitiveness. An ambitious budget will enable us to invest in proactive development projects. And, finally, knowledge, expertise and the development of education will help tap into the potential within each and every European citizen.

We will hold an Eastern Partnership summit in Warsaw this autumn. The Civil Society Forum will take place in Poznań. Moldova is due to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. Signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine would, of course, be a success. The Eastern Partnership also consists of projects that support small and medium enterprises, energy efficiency and administrative reform. It also includes dialogue between parliamentarians and efforts to liberalise the visa regime.

We support the enlargement process. The door to Europe was opened for us, and today we hold it ajar for others. The Polish Presidency will aim to finalise accession negotiations with Croatia and continue them with Turkey. Other Balkan states also stand the chance of obtaining candidate status. Poland supports finalising the EU integration of the Western Balkans.

Security will be another priority for our Presidency. A secure Europe is one that responds effectively to crisis situations; a Europe that cooperates with NATO on defence. Events in Libya have strengthened Polish arguments for an enhanced European defence identity. When blood is shed yet again in our neighbourhood—like it was in the Balkans in the 1990s—Europe should speak the language of diplomacy, backed by force.

A secure Europe is also one that oversees the stable supply of energy to all its Member States and citizens. Thanks to the construction of new connections, from 2015 no EU country will be isolated from the European gas and electrical grids. Successive Polish governments have worked hard to achieve this. The aim of our Presidency will be to regulate cooperation with energy exporters and transit countries. A strategic partnership with the U.S., Russia and China will serve the EU's global engagement. Poland will also promote the issue of food security.

There are two great challenges facing the EU in the coming months.

The first challenge concerns the proposal to enhance the coordination of national economic policies and concern for the common currency - the euro. The Franco-German "Euro Pact" calls for harmonising debt ceilings, the retirement age and certain tax bases. These are reasonable proposals. Most of them are already being implemented in Poland. We can draw satisfaction from the fact that the rest of Europe accepted Poland's idea to open up the Pact to all those who conduct an accountable financial policy. The timeframe for our accession to the eurozone—something we are required to do under our Accession Treaty—remains to be

decided. Let the economists decide when and at what rate the advantages of cheaper borrowing outweigh the loss of our economic flexibility.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I would like to share with you my political assessment on whether entering the eurozone will strengthen or weaken our position. I believe that this situation is best summarized by an American saying: “You are either at the table, or on the menu.”

The second challenge, of course, concerns the historic changes taking place in the Arab world. Here, the old rule proves valid: that regimes seem most stable just before their downfall. Just as the 1980 freedom protests and creation of Solidarity on the Polish coast symbolised a certain era, so do the current events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries in the region. Naturally, there are no simple analogies. Let us remember, however, that in 1989 we too were not expected to succeed.

Poland has more to say on the topic of systemic transformation than others. That is why we will share our experience of freedom with the Tunisians, Egyptians and any others willing to make use of this knowledge. We will also warn them against a situation where—as in Russia in 1917, Germany in 1933, and Iran in 1979—greater freedom gave extremists a chance. We hope that the newly democratic Arab states will support the peace process between a democratic Israel and a Palestine on its path to independence.

The Middle East problem is a test for the common foreign policy that is currently in the making. The European Union must speak with one voice, and it must be heard throughout its neighbourhood. It must also make effective use of its funds to promote democracy and human rights. We will support and channel the EU’s energies so that, as well as the Middle East, our Eastern neighbourhood can benefit from it.

Let us not forget that—in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty—assuming the Presidency is not tantamount to being the only conductor in the Council. The President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy are our partners, and we will lead this orchestra together. We will hold our Presidency in line with what Prime Minister Donald Tusk said, when accepting the Charlemagne Prize in Aachen: “We really have confidence in Europe and in its future.”

Ladies and Gentlemen! To take advantage of the current situation, we need stable relations with all our partners, and our neighbours in particular.

We share common interests and democratic values with Germany. This country has consolidated its key position in Europe. It is in our that Germany impacts Europe through the consultation mechanism, on which Member States—including

Poland—have significant influence. The alternative, Germany’s leadership “by traditional methods,” as one Christian Democratic politician put it, would be worse.

Poland and Germany—despite their differences in potential and location—take a similar view of the EU neighbourhood. They work together to foster democracy, both in the south and the east. Our common initiatives in Ukraine and Belarus increase our impact. Close cooperation with Germany paves the way to the top levels of EU decision-making. It helps us in our dealings with Russia. Germany is also Poland’s biggest economic partner. Trade levels have been growing: in 2010 our exports to Germany amounted to EUR 31 billion, EUR 5 billion more than in 2007, before the economic crisis. Our trade with Germany is also bigger than Germany’s trade with Russia.

On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation, we have stepped up our discussions about Polish minority rights. We are addressing current issues, like unhindered access for ships to the Świnoujście port and future LNG terminal.

Together with Germany and France, we have finally reactivated the Weimar Triangle at the level of heads of state and government, where we hold discussions about EU relations with Russia and other Eastern European states, as well as about defence cooperation.

Our relations with France, one of the major foreign investors in Poland and our partner in many political and economic projects, are good. Great Britain, which shares our views on, among other things, the EU internal market and security, also remains our close partner. We cooperate with Italy and the Holy See for the protection of the rights of Christians in the world.

Members of the House! Those who believe that one way of thinking reigns in Russia are mistaken. Russia is developing and opening up to the outside world, though it does so according to a cultural code different to ours. There are of course those who still “live in the past” and continue to long for superpower glory and heavy-handed rule. However, many Russians, including top leaders, are becoming aware of the need to curb corruption, modernise the economy, and enhance the rule of law and democracy. In short—they realise modernisation is necessary. I am not sure which way Russia will go. But I do know one thing. If it chooses the democratic path leading to integration with the West broadly understood, then Poland will perhaps gain the most from this in Europe.

However, no matter how Russia is ruled, and indeed because Poland creates its foreign policy independently, we need to shape our relations with this important neighbour. There are people in Poland, also in this House, who are building their political credo on eternal enmity towards Russia. We have shunned the logic that states that anything that is bad for Russia must be good for Poland.

The remedy for our concerns about Russia is a modern Poland, which builds its strength on its economic potential, its ties with its allies and its international position. And, just in case, on a modern defence system. The fact that we have no major disputes with Russia only strengthens our position in Europe.

In spite of the crisis, our trade turnover with Russia, according to preliminary data, amounted to USD 24 billion in 2010, up 40% from 2009. We have negotiated a local border traffic agreement that opens up the Kaliningrad Oblast to Europe. The Strait of Baltiysk is now navigable.

We have acted to increase Russian awareness of the crimes committed by the Stalinist regime, as evidenced by the adoption of a Russian Duma resolution on Katyń. I wish to thank the parliamentary caucuses, almost all of which voted in favour of the bill to create a Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation. While differences of interests and assessments prevail, and despite the difficulties relating to the Smolensk investigation, the balance of the last three years of Polish-Russian relations is positive. Our philosophy of making gestures of good will and then acting on the basis of reciprocity has been proven to work.

Ukraine's fate broadly lies in the hands of the Ukrainians. Politicians associated with the Orange Revolution have fallen short of expectations. Declarations expressing the willingness to accede to European institutions must be supported by hard-earned reforms. Corruption, a weak legal system and lowered democratic standards make it difficult for Poland to create a European perspective for Ukraine. However, our bilateral cooperation remains stable. We have set up a Polish-Ukrainian Partnership Forum. We have implemented a local border traffic agreement. Last year, we issued 450 thousand visas in Ukraine—almost as many as all the other Schengen Area countries put together. Despite the crisis, we have opened two new consular offices in Ukraine and established a new seat of the Consulate General in Lviv to reduce visa queues.

Ukraine is our strategic partner. Its accession to the EU is in our long-term interest. Consequently, every time Poland is in a position to do so, and Kiev wants us to, we shall provide Ukraine with our support.

Our policy towards Belarus is determined by conditionality. The fate of the fraternal and European Belarusian nation is something we hold especially dear. I have said on numerous occasions that Poland is in a position to significantly help Belarus, if it decides to follow the path to transition. However, we must respond with equal strength when Belarus strays away from this path and violates fundamental human and civil rights. I am confident that the time will come when we will be able to support a reform-minded Belarus that is open to European cooperation.

For over 20 years, Visegrad has been a necessary and effective format. Our relations with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary have never been better.

We coordinate our positions, including in the run-up to European Council meetings. The success of the Visegrad Group provides an example of how regional cooperation can lead to EU membership for Eastern Partnership countries.

Lithuania and Poland should work together in international policy. After the fall of communism, the Polish nation supported Lithuanians on their road to independence, which they pursued under conditions tougher than ours. In our joint NATO and EU aspirations, we built institutions for governmental and parliamentary dialogue worthy of our common, centuries-old history. We are prepared to return to deeper cooperation. However, we ask that the teaching of Polish language not be further degraded and that the long voiced demands of Poles in Lithuania be carried out. These are loyal citizens of a democratic Lithuania with a right to preserve their identity, culture and property. We welcome President Dalia Grybauskaitė's recent statement about the equal role of Poles in her country. We continue to believe that it will be fulfilled. The upcoming Parliamentary vote on a new education bill will be an important litmus test of how far Lithuania is prepared to go in order to protect the rights of its minorities. We appreciate Lithuania's role as the Presidency of the Community of Democracies. We have been following the activities of the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE with approval.

Our alliance with the United States in NATO remains strong. Our relations with the U.S. are friendly, but mature, given our respective potentials. However, we are aware that U.S. priorities lie elsewhere: in the Middle East and—increasingly—in Asia. Whether the United States will be able to come to our aid in every situation is uncertain.

We supported the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we also know how to look after our own interests. We have negotiated beneficial agreements concerning the deployment of elements of the ballistic missile defence system and the status of US forces in Poland, while maintaining the primacy of Polish jurisdiction. Poland is happy to host American soldiers on its territory for the first time. U.S. Air Force planes will also be stationed in Poland.

Our government supports cooperation between Polish and U.S. companies, particularly in searching for shale gas. Together, Poland and the United States are more effective in promoting democracy around the world.

Members of the House! Three main ideas have guided me during this term in office: (1) reliability; (2) solidarity; and (3) modernisation.

During my time of office, Poland has been building its reliability in the area of security. Our demands to strengthen the role of Article 5 or those concerning new security interests have won the support of our allies and are reflected in NATO's New Strategic Concept.

Ukraine and Georgia have been given the prospect of NATO integration, if they want it, in the form of the Bucharest Summit Declaration, reiterated in the “open door policy” of the New Strategic Concept. The new Allied ballistic missile defence system implemented according to plan will be capable of destroying more types of missiles from all directions. Together with Norway we have influenced European thinking about short-range nuclear weapons. We are ensuring that the Alliance adjust properly itself to the new challenges relating to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and cyber-terrorism. Minister Bogdan Klich has established a Centre for Cyber Security. We plan to join NATO’s Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn.

We act to enhance NATO’s cohesion. We aim to do away with anachronistic divisions between “old” and “new” members of the Alliance. We point to the need to deploy NATO defence infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe. This region deserves the same level of security as that enjoyed by Western Europe. Thanks in part to our efforts, NATO has adopted contingency plans for Poland and the Baltic States. Together with other Allies, we are policing the air space of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. By maintaining our spending at the level of 1.95% GDP for the coming years, we are—both in NATO and in the European Union—an advocate for making a better use of defence budgets in Europe.

As promised, we withdrew from Iraq—and we did so in a way appreciated by both the Iraqi hosts and our allies. In 2009, we decided not to engage in UN-led operations in the Middle East and were thus able to quickly respond to NATO’s call for support in Afghanistan, where we have been pursuing objectives in accordance with the UN Charter. Poland has increased the number of its troops by 30% since April 2010. The Polish military contingent is the seventh largest out of the 48 ISAF states, and the fifth largest European contingent.

There is no easy way out of Afghanistan. Its future will soon be sealed for many years. In accordance with NATO’s decision, 2011 has marked the beginning of the process of handing over responsibility for security to the Afghan people. 2014 should see the end of the presence of our combat units there. We intend to keep our word and here too demonstrate our reliability.

Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe in particular, is of utmost importance for Poland. The Baltic Sea region is also an area of Polish interest. However, we reject the philosophy of “it’s not our business, we are too far away to get involved.” We have political and economic interests in other parts of the world. Whether Poland will remain an important European actor or just a regional partner will depend on how well we engage with these regions.

For this reason, Poland has been building its image as an important European Union Member State capable of influencing the EU’s external policy. The Prime

Minister's visit to India and the President's upcoming visit to China, our biggest business partner in Asia, serve this purpose. Japan and South Korea are interested in increasing their investments in Poland. We want to develop trade and business contacts with Asian countries in many sectors: infrastructure, finance, tourism and high-technologies. We are looking into developing our economic cooperation with Latin America and the ever more dynamically developing Africa.

Members of the House! As Horace wrote, "For it is your business, when the wall next door catches fire." Solidarity holds a special meaning for Poles. Not only the administration, but also dozens of Polish NGOs are involved in supporting the Belarusian people. In the name of solidarity, a month after most of the Belarusian presidential candidates were beaten up and detained, we organised a donor's conference in Warsaw, at which several dozen delegations representing states and international organisations dedicated over EUR 87m to the cause.

The political and economic transformation in Poland was made easier by the support of our friends. Now we are helping others. Over the last two years, the value of Polish development aid—addressed both to Eastern Partnership countries and to the countries of the global South—has exceeded a billion zloty. As a token of international solidarity, we share our experience and support reforms and independent media outlets. In order to effectively support human rights and civil society, we are establishing a Foundation for International Solidarity. We have been consistent in linking development projects with support for democracy, also at the local level. We are training Ukrainian border guards, social workers in Georgia and nurses in Zambia. We are sending volunteers abroad and building schools.

We sympathise with peoples who demand freedom. Last year's summit of the Community of Democracies demonstrated this support. It is no coincidence that the Secretariats of the Community of Democracies and the OSCE Offices for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are based in Warsaw. We have put forward the idea of creating a European Endowment for Democracy, aimed at supporting democratic processes in the entire European neighbourhood.

Solidarity in the European dimension also means eliminating disparities in development. We do not want the difference in GDP per capita between the poorest and the richest Member States to be sevenfold as is the case today. We do, however, want to join forces with others in our drive for stability, prosperity and high living standards in Europe and its neighbourhood. Last year, in the face of the looming crisis, we supported Iceland and Latvia with loans of USD 200m each. We have been particularly committed to the cause of Moldova. Thanks to the joint support of Poland, Sweden and Romania, it has moved closer to European standards. Ukraine should sign an Association Agreement with the EU soon, and Moldova will start negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the EU shortly.

Speaking of solidarity, let us remember the Polish diaspora and Poles living abroad. The main task of our new diaspora policy is to establish a feedback mechanism between Poland and its citizens abroad. It is in the interest of Polish communities to support the Polish state, because its every success strengthens their position in their country of residence. We are helping the Polish diaspora and Poles living abroad in various ways, soliciting their assistance in the implementation of our country's interests. The more effective this implementation, the stronger their position.

Members of the House! Polish diplomacy is increasingly effective. The consular service best shows the functioning of the modernised Foreign Ministry. In 2008–2010, we cut 81 jobs. At the same time, the number of consular acts increased by 15 percent. This was made possible thanks to computerisation—mobile consular offices and electronic procedures. A consular rapid reaction team assists Polish citizens during natural disasters such as the one in Haiti, when travel agents go bankrupt, or during the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In Egypt, we issued documents in holiday resorts not only to Poles but also to other EU citizens whose countries lack our modern tools. Thanks to the on-line registration system, the number of Poles participating in elections outside our borders has increased. Consular services are also generating budget revenue—last year this amounted to PLN 150m.

In order to make savings and exchange good practices, we encourage our partners to share diplomatic missions. The first joint consular office of the Visegrad Group countries opened in Cape Town last year. A consul of the Kingdom of Sweden is officiating in the Polish Consulate General in Kaliningrad.

Our diplomats have been equipped with secure notebooks and smartphones. Negotiations with foreign partners take place in real time. Thanks to satellite phones, we have maintained contact with our missions after a revolution has broken out or a natural disaster occurred. We are introducing an electronic document circulation system. We will soon launch a new Ministry home-page, together with 150 thematic and foreign mission websites. Over the last three years the Ministry has become, in the managerial sense, a global corporation.

Young people again see diplomacy as an attractive career path. Over two hundred candidates competed for fewer than 20 places at the Diplomatic Academy last year. While building this modern service, we continue to remember our tradition. I have made 16th November, the day Marshal Józef Piłsudski dispatched a cable proclaiming the rebirth of the Polish state, Foreign Service Day. The Council of Ministers has decreed the establishment of the “Bene Merito” distinction, awarded to Poles and foreigners who strengthen our country's position abroad.

We are overhauling the Ministry's infrastructure, because one cannot hope to be a serious international player with embassies with Communist-period interiors. Before the start of our Presidency, we will open new offices of our Permanent Representation in Brussels, across the street from the European External Action Service. This is the biggest capital investment in the history of Polish diplomacy. It will serve us for many years to come. In the summer, we will open the new residence of the Polish Ambassador in Washington and the new office of the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, and a new Consulate in London in the autumn. Investment work is under way in London, Vilnius, Tbilisi, and Baghdad. Finally, once we learn the winner of the design contest, we will start building a new embassy in Berlin.

These investments have been accompanied by savings in the form of closing down redundant missions and the sale of unnecessary property. We are economical. We have modernised the Ministry. Today, Polish diplomacy stands alongside the best in the world.

In a few weeks' time, the government will adopt the catalogue of Polish foreign policy priorities for 2011–2015. Our thinking is both strategic and operational. We are assisted by research centres in planning our policy. The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) have been ranked among the top twenty best public research centres in the world. Under the Ministry's oversight, deep reform is taking place in Poznań's Institute for Western Affairs. Global think-tanks—the U.S.-based GMF and the European Council on Foreign Relations—are opening offices in Warsaw.

Members of the House! This has been a difficult three years. At times we felt all hope had left us. Polish soldiers fell in Afghanistan. The plane crash near Smoleńsk took the lives of the President of Poland and many of our colleagues, among them my close associates, including Andrzej Kremer, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was especially dear to me.

At times, the world seemed to be teetering on the edge of chaos. Dictators, from North Korea to Libya, remained unpunished. We witnessed unjust wars, like the Russo-Georgian conflict. Cold War ghosts have returned. The economic crisis has shown the fragility of the global order. Social, demographic and climate-related challenges have made us realise once and for all that Poland's favourable international environment is not a given.

However, even the most difficult of circumstances can also bring hope. The self-immolation of a young man with no future can trigger a democratic revolution that will change the face of the Middle East. International institutions can learn lessons from the crisis. We admire the efficiency with which Japan is coping with the natural disaster that has befallen it.

Mr President! Mr Speaker! Mr Prime Minister! Members of the House! In closing, let me once again formulate our goal: Poland as a serious country; an enviable partner. We can become such a partner—provided we continue our prudent policy—within a decade. This is doable. Let us bear in mind, however, that such status cannot be self-awarded or won by stamping one's feet or shouting. An international position is something that can only be gained in the eyes of others. The less internal squabbling and the fewer external brawls, the more fundamental work we engage in, and the faster we shall achieve our aim.

Ignacy Jan Paderewski gave us a piece of advice on how to continue the work that had then just begun. It has now been entrusted to us, and we shall hand it over to our successors in a better condition than we inherited it:

“Poland is not going left or right. If it were to go consequently in one or the other direction and reach the final limits, it would find itself either in the ditches of reactionism or in the puddles of anarchy. Poland advances but straight, straight ahead...”

Thank you for your attention.

Government Information on Polish Foreign Policy in 2012

(presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
Radosław Sikorski at a sitting of the Sejm on 29 March 2012)

Mr President! Madam Speaker! Mr Prime Minister! Government Ministers!
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Members of the House!

A year ago, I reported on our activities covering a full term in office. Today, as the longest-serving Minister of Foreign Affairs in the history of free Poland, I will unveil plans for a second term. Thanks to the trust you have put in the Civic Platform-Polish People's Party coalition—as reflected in the last election results—Polish foreign policy has become more stable, and more predictable.

The correlation of forces around Poland is still propitious, though less so than recently. I see no threats to peace. Every year, Poland is moving closer to occupying its rightful place in the world. But the West's economic and military might, as well as its prestige, have weakened. The Community decision-making method is being increasingly questioned in Europe and the economic crisis has made the European Union less attractive as a civilisation and less capable of exerting influence. The United States is cutting defence spending and reorienting towards the Pacific region. Thanks to high raw material prices and the determination of the Russian leadership, efforts are underway to unite former post-Soviet states around a political decision-making hub alternative to Europe.

We are forced to push forward with our plans at a time of global crisis. But before we get accustomed to the fact that Poland is coping with its aftermath better than any other country in Europe, I wish to remind you that this has not always been the case. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, citizens of the Second Polish Republic suffered from wide-scale poverty. In 1935 Poland's GDP was half that of 1929, while unemployment in the East of the country topped 50 per cent. We live in difficult times, albeit not as dramatic as those I have just described. During this crisis, the Polish economy—which ranks sixth in Europe—is expanding, not contracting. According to the OECD, since 2007 we have been the fastest growing economy in this select group of 34 richest countries in the world.

Let me repeat once again: today's Poland is the best Poland we have ever had. As the chief of Poland's diplomacy, I believe it is my task to pursue Polish foreign policy in such a way as to substantially help improve our security, bring greater prosperity and boost our strength.

Members of the House! Last year the main instrument which enabled us to buck and reverse worrying trends was, naturally, the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. I am proud to state that despite the adverse

circumstances, Poland's leadership is widely viewed as the best one since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

“Poland in the Vanguard of Europe”—to quote *Libération*, “The Oscar for Best Presidency Goes to Poland”—*Hospodářské noviny*, “Poland Holds Off Euroscepticism”—*El País*, “Let's Learn the European Spirit from the Poles”—an Italian daily. These are just a few of the foreign press headlines devoted to the Polish Presidency.

Our countrymen were of a similar favourable opinion: no less than 68 per cent of Poles consider our Presidency a success. We have reaffirmed our status as a heavyweight Member State. We changed Poland's image from a country which only benefits from the EU to a country which—true—benefits, but also inspires others to act. Today when others think of Poland, they think of economic growth, a modern country, and effective governance—we have become a partner worth courting.

Poland has proven that it is a reliable and responsible state—a country which creates solutions, not problems. We have kept faith in the European Union, advocating the principle of “more Europe—not less.” We have safeguarded EU cohesion in the face of proposals which undermined the very idea of the entire Community project. Thanks to Polish efforts, the European Parliament adopted the so-called six-pack—a set of regulations and directives enhancing the Eurozone's economic order. In my opinion, had the EU adopted it earlier, we could have avoided a crisis as severe as this one. The Polish Presidency also drafted the “European Consensus on Growth”—a report comprising recommendations on how to spur economic growth in Europe. Our Presidency also brought the EU closer to the adoption—after 30 years in the pipeline—of a compromise on the EU patent. We also signed an accession treaty with Croatia and closed six negotiation chapters with Iceland. Our administration demonstrated efficiency; our officials showed competence and effectiveness.

Despite the EU's involvement in its Southern neighbourhood, the Polish Presidency managed to table an offer to the East. We agreed on the text of the Association Agreement with Ukraine, due to be initialled as early as tomorrow. We have initiated negotiations on similar agreements with Georgia and Moldova. Whether our Eastern neighbours' European aspirations will come true will depend largely on them. Warsaw hosted the 2nd Eastern Partnership Summit, at which EU Member States adopted a declaration on Belarus' non-compliance with democratic standards. The debate on the text of the declaration also demonstrated that, unfortunately, not all Eastern Partnership countries are aware of the fact that the path to Europe leads through respect for the European standards of democracy.

I ask the Eurosceptics, how do you imagine our Eastern policy without the European Union? Could we have funded a project equal in scope to the Eastern Partnership by going it alone? It is there, in the East, that the phenomenon

described in academic textbooks on European integration is most clearly visible: thanks to the EU, Poland's influence is increasing manifold.

Ladies and Gentlemen! During our Presidency, we kept with tradition and worked to ensure stable surroundings for the European Union, in both the Southern and Eastern dimensions of its neighbourhood policy. Both these vectors of our policy will be supported by the European Endowment for Democracy. We already have the necessary political agreement to initiate the project, which may begin operating before the end of the year. Poland is helping Arab states that are setting out on the difficult path of modernization and democratization.

We engage Europe in the pursuit of common objectives, including those of utmost importance for Poland's foreign policy. At the same time, we give the EU the strength and means to put into action the objectives of the Union as a whole. Our successful Presidency strengthened Poland's position in the EU—indeed, all around the world. Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted on behalf of the High Representative on the occasion of 14 meetings with third countries; I myself deputized for Catherine Ashton several times. I spoke on her behalf before the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and headed EU missions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thanks to the Presidency, Poland's brand awareness has been raised globally. We are using this to effectively pursue our interests beyond Europe, particularly in Asia and Latin America.

During the Presidency we acted on behalf of the entire European Union, while at the same time looking after our national interests. A testament to this is the fact that the European Commission's proposal on the 2014–2020 multiannual financial framework continues to serve as the basis for further negotiations. We oppose initiatives aimed at giving Poland less funds from the EU budget on account of our robust economic growth. We do not want to be punished for being a success story!

During the negotiations, we will initiate a round of intensive cooperation between the Polish parliament and parliaments of EU Member States. In direct coordination with Visegrad Group countries and the Friends of Cohesion Policy group, we will strive to prevent the budget negotiations from becoming an agreement between the biggest countries.

European investments are key for Poland: they help fend off the crisis and bolster domestic market activity. They are advantageous not only for its immediate beneficiaries; they also indirectly benefit the net payers by racking up profits for enterprises from these countries. This is also our contribution to the development of the entire Community.

For many years now, Poland has responsibly pursued its economic and financial policies. The provisions adopted fifteen years ago in our Constitution are now being copied by the rest of Europe. The draft provisions of the European "Fiscal Compact" repeat Article 216 of our Basic Law. We had no doubts that acceding to

the Fiscal Compact was in Poland's best interest. By 2015 we want to fulfil all of the convergence criteria and be able to adopt the euro. It is in Poland's political interest to accede to the most tightly-knit group of countries that use the single currency.

The Presidency was the time of influencing Europe. But it also helped us understand the European Union—not as debutants, but as its co-hosts. President Bronisław Komorowski weighed in on the issue while addressing parliament, calling the Presidency—and I quote—“the crowning of Poland's efforts, of the hard work of the entire Polish society and [...] all of the governments in power since 1989, all of our Presidents.”

Members of the House! On Tuesday, the government adopted two documents. The first is Poland's foreign policy priorities for the current year. The text itself is classified, but I can tell you that it is the first such document to include a list of strategic economic projects which we will fervently support. Last year, our diplomats made over 600 interventions on behalf of Polish companies active in over 60 countries; many in regions outside Europe, for example in war-torn Libya.

The second document, drafted pursuant to the Government Administration Branches Act, is entitled “Priorities of Polish Foreign Policy for 2012–2016”. It is the first foreign policy strategy to have been published in the last twenty years. It presents a detailed analysis of our objectives and the tasks that lie ahead. The document will be published in the next few minutes on the Foreign Ministry website. Madam Speaker, if possible, I would like to request that the “Priorities...” be included in the minutes of this session of the Sejm. Therefore, I would like to address here only those issues which I see as particularly crucial or pressing.

On account of our bilateral trade, but also increasingly due to the similarities between our economic cultures and political concepts, Germany is our most important European partner. Whether we look at its population, GDP, or the voting powers acquired under the Lisbon Treaty, Germany is the biggest shareholder in the European Union. The ‘biggest’—with around one-fourth of shares—but not the ‘dominant’ one. This means that it is difficult to get anything done in the EU against Germany's will, but it also means that in order to implement its ideas, Germany must look for more than just one partner. If a given endeavour is at risk, obviously it is the biggest shareholder that has the greatest responsibility—and the most means—to come to the rescue. We want to work together towards a stronger Union. As I said to our German friends during my speech in Berlin: “Provided you include us in decision-making, Poland will support you.”

We welcome our intensified cooperation with France, also in the Weimar Triangle framework. It is a good sign that France is beginning to appreciate Poland's input in shaping a strong European leadership. We regret the fact that the United Kingdom—a country so dear to generations of Polish immigrants, including myself; which embraces a philosophy of freedom and particularly economic freedom that

we share—is not willing to become a leader of European defence. We are looking forward to close political dialogue with the new governments of Spain and Italy.

We are working shoulder to shoulder with Sweden in implementing the Eastern Partnership and ushering in change in the EU's entire neighbourhood. The world took notice of our disarmament proposals put forward together with Norway, a country which is also a source of inspiration for us in the field of sustainable exploration of natural gas deposits.

In July, when Poland takes over the Visegrad Group presidency, we will table a set of initiatives aimed at beefing up our excellent relations with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Today Hungary shoulders the responsibility for our region's reputation in the field of respecting democratic principles. By 2016 we will have established the Visegrad Battle Group—our regional input into the development of the EU's defence capacity. Our key partners—Romania and Bulgaria—will be invited to take part in many projects, including those coordinated within the Visegrad Group. We are glad to see our ties with Estonia and Latvia grow ever stronger. In our relations with Lithuania, we are hoping for a new opening with the government which will be sworn in after the October elections. Unvaryingly, we support Israel's right to exist within secure boundaries, but we advise against war with Iran. We encourage dialogue with the Palestinians.

Ladies and Gentlemen! In the East, things are worse than we would have wished, but much better than they had been in the past, or than they could be right now. We must count on evolutionary change to occur. Both Poland and the EU will offer incentives for further transformation in reply to tangible transformation activities, in line with the principle of “more for more.” One day, we would like to look at our Eastern neighbours and quote the words of Professor Jan Kieniewicz, “this is neither East, nor West—it is Europe, quite simply. Europe in the continent's Eastern section, or an Intermarium of free citizens returned to Europe after many centuries.”

Ukraine remains our most important non-Atlantic strategic partner. We are invariably willing to support it—so long as it chooses its pro-European destiny. We call on the Ukrainian authorities to create political conditions—including standards of opposition treatment and electoral and judicial norms—which will make it possible to sign and implement the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. We are looking forward to great football entertainment during the upcoming European championship.

We hope that the new president of Russia will lead his country on a path of modernization, in line with the expectations of Russian society. We will continue to work towards Polish-Russian reconciliation, which should take on a spiritual dimension during the upcoming and first-ever visit of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

We are glad that the Agreement on Local Border Traffic with the Kaliningrad Oblast is due to be implemented soon; we are all the more surprised by signals pointing to plans to deploy new-generation offensive arms in the area. We are pushing hard for the return of our property—the wreckage of the Tu-154 plane in which our leaders and friends perished.

In its relations with Europe, Belarus unfortunately insists on sticking to the principle of “less for less.” In line with the proposal put forward by Donald Tusk during the Eastern Partnership Summit, we have prepared a cooperation offer which will await the day when repression ends and the political opposition is allowed to play its due role.

The United States is our most important non-European partner. We get on especially well whenever and wherever we decide to join forces and foster the ideals of freedom and democracy. We are glad that U.S. companies are prospecting for Polish shale gas reserves and bidding to provide technologies for planned nuclear power plants. We will welcome with open arms the permanent U.S. military detachment to be stationed in Poland. We stand ready to implement the Poland-U.S. agreement on the missile defence base, even though we are aware of the fact that U.S. plans may be subject to modification, for example, if an agreement is reached on Iran’s nuclear programme. We expect President Barack Obama to fulfil his obligation to include Poland under the visa waiver programme, even though we note that visa-free travel to the U.S. now requires payment and prior registration.

Members of the House! Our security is first and foremost in the hands of the Polish Armed Forces; in the international dimension we count on NATO support. According to NATO’s budget office, in the past twenty years Poland overtook all other countries in terms of defence spending increases, which amounted to 210 per cent. We will do our best to make sure that the decisions taken at the upcoming NATO Summit strengthen the Alliance’s capabilities to fulfil its primary objective: to safeguard the territorial integrity of its Member States. We also expect a decision on the pullout from Afghanistan. Pursuant to the already adopted timeframe, Poland will phase out its activities; by the end of this year, we will cease combat and begin operating as a training mission. Political arrangements are currently underway which would make it possible to announce in Chicago the achievement of so-called interim operability of NATO’s ballistic missile defence system.

The experiences of the Polish Presidency show us that EU Common Security and Defence Policy is unfortunately impossible to implement in a group of 27 countries, and that we must initiate tighter cooperation between willing countries, in line with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

This year we begin the campaign to make Poland a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2018.