



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Slovenia  
Nataša Pirc Musar  
at the traditional ceremony marking the Slovenia-UK Friendship Day**

Gornji Suhor pri Vinici, 8 May 2023

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*Dear Mr Mayor,  
Dear Madam Ambassador,  
Minister of Defence,  
people of Gornji Suhor,  
dear friends – Slovenian and British guests,  
ladies and gentlemen,*

*It is with special honour and pride that I stand among you today for the first time, in a place that symbolises sacrifice, humanity, friendship, peace, harmony, gratitude, tribute, and lasting remembrance. Above all, it is a symbol of the good-hearted people who live here and preserve the memory of past events and of your ancestors, for whom helping their fellow human beings was at the centre of their lives in dangerous and difficult times. After the bomber crashed on 31 March 1945, the quick and selfless help of the villagers enabled the survival and care for the crew members and the dignified burial of those who unfortunately did not survive the crash. This help has shown that in the horrors of war, we remain a people who want peace and the freedom to live on our own land, for ourselves as well as for others.*

*It is therefore important to note that we are standing in the municipality of Črnomelj in Bela krajina, which became the first liberated territory in Slovenia in World War II, after*

*the capitulation of Italy (1943). During the war, the liberated territory paid its toll with the loss of human lives. But at the same time, it was a constant light, a beacon of hope and a great impetus to the struggle for liberation and to the entire national liberation movement at home and throughout the world.*

*Dear guests,*

*Humanitarian and patriotic events and actions, such as those that took place here in Gornji Suhor, forge priceless and eternal bonds – bonds between neighbours, friends, acquaintances and nations. I am therefore particularly pleased that, for the fifth year running, this village has been a monument to the friendship between Slovenia and the United Kingdom, which is rich and diverse. Slovenia and the United Kingdom are friendly and allied countries, connected by a common European heritage, shared values and principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the joint tackling of global challenges.*

*Cooperation with countries that share the same values and are committed to peace is particularly important in view of the difficult situation and challenges facing Europe and the world today. Over the span of more than three decades of bilateral diplomatic relations, cooperation has been strengthened, as illustrated by the UK-Slovenia joint statement of intent on enhancing bilateral relations, which was signed at ministerial level last year. This confirmed the mutual interest in further developing excellent relations, friendship and co-operation on diplomacy, economic issues and on science, defence and security, education and culture, tourism, and other areas.*

*The bonds that are forged, be it between people or between institutions, are priceless. And bonds that are forged in culture and the arts are that much more special. I am therefore delighted that today we will hear music jointly performed by the Slovene Military Orchestra and The Band of The Royal Yeomanry, which gives the event additional symbolic significance. Numerous musicians, visual artists, poets, writers and theatre-makers are working successfully across the two countries. It is also important that in Slovenia and in the UK, we actively pursue further networking and joint projects in research, academic and innovation communities of both countries.*

*As we are today commemorating an event that is directly linked to security and the defence of values, freedom and sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country, I cannot but mention current events and the war on European soil. We are once again faced with the unnecessary loss of human life, human rights violations, and a humanitarian disaster. Peaceful settlement of disputes, solidarity, and respect for international law must remain the cornerstones of the international community. An important aspect in this regard is the mutual trust-building and cooperation between nations in various areas, including defence and military.*

*Defence and military cooperation between Slovenia and the United Kingdom can therefore be an important example of how to build trust and deter potential threats. Bilateral cooperation and cooperation within NATO contribute to exchange of experience, education and training, networking, opportunities for cooperation in research, development and innovation, and in the defence industry. Security and defence are becoming inextricably linked to the civilian community and rapid technological developments. Therefore, additional opportunities for cooperation can lie in joint efforts to adapt to change related to the use of breakthrough technologies, dual-use technologies, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly products, and similar. I believe that there is still a lot of untapped potential for bilateral cooperation that we will be able to explore in the years to come.*

*Dear guests,*

*Two days ago, I had the opportunity and honour to attend with my husband the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla in London. Please allow me to take this opportunity to once again extend my sincere congratulations to the British people and all friends of the United Kingdom on this occasion, and my best wishes to the King and the Queen in fulfilling their important mission. I am particularly pleased that, in addition to the musicians of The Band of The Royal Yeomanry, we are joined today by the pilots of the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team who took part in the Coronation. I would also like to thank the members of the Slovenian Armed Forces and the Police. A special thank you goes out to the students of the Dragatuš Primary School, the dancers of the Dragatuš Children's Folklore Group, the musicians, and all*

*the representatives of the local community who took part in the preparation and organisation of today's ceremony.*

*Dear people of Gornji Suhor,*

*A special thank you and tribute goes out to you. Without your heartfelt support, care, dedication and intergenerational transmission of memory, today's event would not have taken place. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your hospitality and for the great contribution you have made to remembering our history and to the friendship between the two countries.*

*In the end, all things in life stand or fall with people. That is why I would like to say that you are a great example to the world of what Slovenians are like – a self-sacrificing and peaceful nation open to cooperation. This is, after all, what our greatest poet described so vividly in what is now our national anthem.*

*I would like to conclude by saying this: peace and happiness to Slovenians, peace and happiness to the British people, and peace and happiness to all the nations of the world!*

*Thank you.*