



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia
and the Commander-in-Chief of the Slovenian Armed Forces**

Dr Nataša Pirc Musar

at a ceremony on Slovenian Armed Forces Day

Ljubljana, 13 May 2023

Check against delivery.

*Dear members of the Slovenian Armed Forces,
dear citizens and residents of the Republic of Slovenia,
distinguished guests,
ladies and gentlemen.*

Today we are gathered to celebrate Slovenian Armed Forces Day, the day of:

- the organisation that has a unique mission to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country and to contribute to peace and stability throughout the world;*
- the organisation whose fundamental bond is honour, love of our homeland, courage, perseverance, sacrifice, collegiality;*
- the organisation which enjoys high support and trust among citizens;*

- *which always helps us when we find ourselves in crisis situations or natural disasters;*
- *which supports Slovenian athletes;*
- *and which is primarily made up of dedicated, courageous people – members of the Slovenian Armed Forces, military personnel and civilians employed by the military. You, who contribute to creating this important pillar of our national security with your professionalism, skills and dedication to your profession.*

I am happy and proud to be among you today on your holiday and, of course, among all the other attendees, among friends of the Slovenian Armed Forces and friends of the Republic of Slovenia. I welcome the decision of the Ministry of Defence and the Slovenian Armed Forces to host a different celebration for this year's Slovenian Armed Forces Day – a full-day dynamic programme whose aim is to transparently present the capabilities, equipment, the occupation of soldier and how the Slovenian Armed Forces function. Members of the Slovenian Armed Forces demonstrated a broad range of various skills, techniques and technologies that, as an indispensable part of the military organisation, provide security while at the same time offering various interesting career opportunities.

I would particularly like to note the importance of the openness of the military organisation. I think it is very important that stronger ties, understanding and affection between the military and society, between uniformed members of the Slovenian Armed Forces and residents in different environments begin to be built once again. It seems that we have forgotten too quickly the feelings of pride and security that the Slovenian uniform instilled in us in the 1990s. Wherever we saw it, it represented inspiration, hope and a sense of happiness because we have finally established our own country.

Believe me, that uniform, those members and their courage and dedication to duty are still here. I feel them myself as I visit the commands and units of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

Perhaps the reason why we perceive them a little bit differently today than before is professionalisation, because of which a large part of the young population, our sons and daughters, more rarely gets in touch with them or with direct service to the homeland. However, we must be aware that this service, this mission, this task is performed by a professional army on our behalf and for all of us, unfortunately sometimes at the cost of their own lives. Members of the Slovenian Armed Forces are ready to give to us and their homeland something that is priceless – their lives. For this reason, they deserve and need our constant support, compassion and gratitude. Let's not forget how demanding the current global security situation is, and what is happening on European soil, just 600 kilometres from the Slovenian border.

Dear Sirs/Madams,

15 May 1991 was a major milestone, as the training of the first Slovenian military conscripts began on that day in two training centres in Slovenia. At the same time, it had a significant symbolic and patriotic importance, as people were aware that armed forces are being built to protect and defend the sovereignty of their own country. The past and present of our nation teach us that we have often had to fight for our existence. The Slovenian Armed Forces have been built on this tradition. Since then, they have come a long way in changing and restructuring. Today, they are part of various national and international activities in NATO, the European Union, the Organisation of the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and elsewhere, where members of the Slovenian Armed Forces enjoy respect and a good reputation. We can be very proud of that. In addition to political wisdom, building of trust, peaceful resolution of conflicts, dialogue and broader cooperation in various social fields in the international community, joint action, exercises, training, international operations, connectivity of partner and allied armies are an important foundation for maintaining stability in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

cooperation and integration are the foundation of social development and prosperity and, at the same time, indispensable in a global, interdependent world. A special dimension is brought by the rapid development of advanced technology and

digitisation. We know that in the past, major technological solutions (such as the internet) were first developed in the military, and that they were only applied to a broader social benefit later. Today, however, the civilian sphere is often at the forefront with research, innovation and the possible dual-purpose use of technology. The military needs it, but at the same time they must support each other in developing socially beneficial solutions, for example in cyber security, hydrogen technologies or energy and environmentally efficient solutions.

We witness on a daily basis the changes brought about by the development of emerging and disruptive technologies – artificial intelligence, quantum computing, large databases, autonomous systems, space sensors, hypersonic capabilities, biotechnology. These technologies will be dominant in the next twenty years. They will represent a decisive advantage in information management and strategic decision-making, both in civil society and on potential battlefields. For this reason, it is essential to integrate various social subsystems, the economy, critical infrastructure, science and defence. Searching for synergies and promoting scientific research and innovation is the only correct path for the future.

This is also a particular challenge for the Slovenian Armed Forces, which will have to be able to adapt to the aforementioned trends and thus also to various generations of young people who will possess important technological skills. If anything, it is clear today that nothing will be static in the future, and that the rapid change of everything will be a constant. Countries and individuals who are able to respond to changes quickly and successfully will be more competitive, safer and more successful.

It is no secret that the long-term lack of development has had consequences for the capabilities of the Slovenian Armed Forces. It is encouraging that there is political will in the legislative and executive branches of power for development and modernisation to be accelerated. Only in this way will members of the Slovenian Armed Forces be adequately protected and equipped to carry out the tasks required by law. Modern security threats are multifaceted, complex and hybrid – focused on various negative effects, such as interruptions in the operation of critical infrastructure or other national subsystems. This is why we are facing a challenging task that requires readiness for all possible scenarios. Safety is not a given, which is very clear today. It is an asset

that we must fight for and nurture, as it enables the entire society to function without disruption.

Dear Sirs/Madams,

allow me, on your and our special day, to express my sincere congratulations to all employees of the Slovenian Armed Forces and to your families, who carry the burden of this responsible mission with you on a daily basis. At the same time, I express my sincere gratitude for your dedicated and professional work on my behalf and on behalf of citizens and residents of the Republic of Slovenia. Thank you for enabling us to rely on you; thank you for always doing your job; thank you for being with us in the mountains and during natural disasters; thank you for taking care of our security and defending our statehood!

In conclusion, I would like to say the following: a successful military organisation will not be one that offers only blood, sweat and tears (to paraphrase Churchill) – but one that will also offer digitisation, sensors, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber defence and the like. I am convinced that with the development guidelines recently passed in the National Assembly and the increase in investments, the Slovenian Armed Forces are on the right track. The responsibility for a long-term consensus and unwavering support for the appropriate conditions for their functioning is on all of us, first and foremost on politicians and then on citizens. Let us not forget – in the critical times, we opted for an independent state and an independent army. In our history and tradition one cannot exist without the other.

Good luck to the Slovenian Armed Forces, good luck to Slovenia!

Thank you.