



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia
Nataša Pirc Musar
at the reception on the occasion of
the 30th Anniversary of the membership of the Republic of Slovenia
in the Council of Europe and the Slovenian Statehood Day**

Strasbourg, 21 June 2023

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*Distinguished President and members of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, drage Slovenke in Slovenci,
Good evening.*

It is my great honour and privilege to welcome you to celebrate together the 30th anniversary of the accession of Slovenia to the Council of Europe and our Statehood Day this Sunday. I thank the head of the Slovenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Tamara Vonta, for co-hosting tonight's reception.

The Council of Europe is an important part of my personal and Slovenia's commitment and engagement to strong multilateralism. The Council of Europe is a legal bedrock of Europe and beyond. It is also our continent's watchdog on human rights and the rule of law, the two basic tenets of thriving democracies.

And that was the starting point for all my meetings yesterday and today with the Secretary-General, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and the President of the European Court of Human Rights. We have deposited, as the 25th state, an instrument of ratification of the 108+ Convention on big data protection. This afternoon I addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We discussed the paths along which we can work together in the pursuit of the results of the Fourth Summit in Reykjavik I also attended.

Allow me to mention just three key priorities. The first, solidarity with Ukraine and ensuring accountability for the crimes committed during the brutal war of aggression against that country. Let us be clear: in fighting for Ukraine, the Ukrainians are fighting a war for European values. Secondly, the unconditional and swift execution of the Court's judgments. This is the very basis of the rule of law and thus an absolute obligation for each and every one of our countries. And thirdly, the Council of Europe must remain the standard bearer with a global reach. It is uniquely positioned to lead the way by evolving standards to respond to modern challenges. Clearly one of these is climate change, and my talks in Strasbourg included furthering of the human right to a clean and safe environment. I also believe that the Council of Europe and the EU are natural allies in providing cutting-edge regulation on artificial intelligence. While work on the EU AI Act is progressing, I encourage the Council of Europe to keep up its ambition towards an open framework convention on AI and human rights.

This coming Sunday, on 25 June, we will celebrate Statehood Day to mark the adoption of the constitutional charter of sovereign Slovenia. In the Hall of the Council of Europe, you will find a unique exposition on the Constitution of Slovenia in pictures, which I invite you to visit.

You will also have the chance to experience Slovenian gastronomy, with food and fine wine brought especially for this occasion from Slovenia. Let this whet your appetite to visit my beautiful green country, which is also one of Europe's biodiversity hotspots!

And since our Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Ambassador Andrej Slapničar, is finishing his term in Strasbourg, I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and his team for all their work over the past four years.

As we have in the past 30-plus years, Slovenia will continue to be guided by our shared European values of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, as enshrined and protected under the Council of Europe roof.

Thank you.