



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia  
Nataša Pirc Musar  
at the State Ceremony on the occasion of the Statehood Day**

Ljubljana, 24 June 2023

Check against delivery.

*Dear Citizens,  
Dear Residents of the Republic of Slovenia,  
Esteemed Guests,*

*It is a great honour to have the opportunity to address you as your president. I am fortunate to live in a period when a new milestone in Slovenian history is being laid, with women assuming important positions in the governance of our society. There are many other such milestones. For we must not forget: for centuries, speaking Slovenian in Slovenia was not a matter of course. Our rulers tried to dismember our land, to subjugate us. We resisted all such efforts and won. We won our own independent country – despite circumstances that were often not kind to us in the past.*

*All of this is history, our history, which helps us make sense of the present and look to our common future.*

*Historical events are discussed by many. If historians do so, that is good and normal. Historians need time to describe events and make sense thereof. They do not need politicians to interfere. Political attempts to interpret specific past events are usually aimed at promoting the present narrow goals of interest groups, political parties or even individuals. This also applies to partisan orchestration of the events in history that Slovenia should remember and commemorate. Orchestration that even leads to absurd situations where days of remembrance are introduced virtually overnight and abolished in the same way. In politics, fire should not be fought with fire. Such actions divide, not unite. They reflect intolerance of dissent, intolerance enabling extreme views to flourish, including the subtle promotion of civil war.*

*What civil war? In whose name? For whom? Do we all understand that civil war means bloodshed? Such thinking is reminiscent of a bygone era, when Europe was led by politicians with no vision and its people were left without statesmen and with a shattered economy. It created a breeding ground for negative emotions, which were*

*seized upon by populists and radicals. The results in the form of world wars are well known. The key, however, is what comes after such historical upheavals and severe historical ordeals for a nation.*

*Nelson Mandela, the world-famous South African leader, spent more than 25 years of his life in prison for opposing apartheid. However, after he was released and South Africa shook off white domination, he rejected and prevented a quest for vengeance by the black majority against the white minority. His will was to unite and connect, not to divide, and this prevented the loss of many lives. Nelson Mandela was an honourable gentleman, a statesman – not a politician. He understood history in a statesmanlike way. I would like to see such a statesmanlike understanding of history in Slovenia as well.*

*I wonder whether, in all these decades of questioning our history, we may have overlooked that the true, statesmanlike way out of the pitfalls of history is actually to pursue reconciliation between intimacy, law, and freedom?*

*Intimacy is the pain of relatives who lost loved ones in or after war. The pain of a mother who lost her son is the same, no matter which army he fought in. The pain of a child whose father did not return from the war is the same whether the father was on one side or the other. Intimacy does not know the colour of a uniform. The pain of each loss must be respected and understood.*

*Law is the way to bring justice to all those who lost their relatives in extrajudicial or unlawful killings. Extrajudicial killings are not only a flagrant violation of the law; they are and must be a subject of public condemnation and remembrance of a tragic period in Slovenian history.*

*Freedom is the firm realisation that without the resolute NO to fascism and Nazism, without the countless lives extinguished in the struggle against the occupier's yoke, the dismemberment of the homeland and the destruction of – in quotation marks – “inferior peoples”, there would have been no Slovenia as an independent entity after 1945, and there would have been no Slovenia as an independent state after 1991. History is clear and irrefutable on this point.*

*Intimacy. Law. Freedom. Three words that are not only words of the past, but also words of the future. We need to get back to what we do best: Focusing on our common interests; preserving forever this place in the world as the country we have won, with a history of which we are not ashamed and which is also based on the simultaneous condemnation of all crimes and recognition of the importance of the liberation struggle. With a language we speak freely; with a culture we create and nurture in all its manifold manifestations; with acceptance of minorities; and with an energy focused on the future.*

*All this presupposes that we are an inclusive society seeking consensus on our present orientations in order to reap the fruits of our common commitments and the responsibility to deliver on them in the future – not only for the present generations of our country's citizens, but also for posterity.*

*In The Toast, Prešeren addresses a communion bound “by thoughts of brotherhood”. Those bound by thoughts of brotherhood do not talk about eliminating different-minded people. Those bound by thoughts of brotherhood are tolerant, strangers to hatreds – xenophobia, homophobia, and racist and other intolerant beliefs that threaten our fellow human beings. In the world of those bound by thoughts of brotherhood, dissent is not a curse but a value. Diversity enriches us all. Those bound by thoughts of brotherhood know that gender equality and intergenerational solidarity are essential for the development of all potentials in society. We recognise that minorities and vulnerable groups of all kinds are an integral part of our society. A society that is co-created by all of us, the residents of the Republic of Slovenia, who contribute to our common well-being.*

*Those bound by thoughts of brotherhood know that each one of us is given only one life. It is right to live it fully, in fulfilment and safety. Non-violence must be our guiding principle everywhere – from the upbringing and care of the youngest, to the education system, to care homes for older people. Let us not forget that the state is not an abstract concept – the state is people, people with souls, hearts and emotions. That is why each of us, especially those in different leadership positions, must strive for a human-friendly state.*

*For the rule of law without compromise. For a Constitutional Court that will build its authority on professionalism, ethics and integrity. We do not want single-mindedness or double-mindedness, but professionalism as the sole criterion for the selection and work of judges. For a high-quality police force whose core mission is the safety of every single one of us. For a high-quality fire-fighting service; our firefighters prove time and again through their dedication how important they are to society. For high-quality armed forces that will always and regularly ensure that our historic gains, our statehood, are not under threat.*

*For a high-quality diplomatic service that will consistently represent the democratic norms and values of the Republic of Slovenia in international relations. For non-governmental and humanitarian organisations that draw attention to social problems and offer help to fellow human beings when the state fails, which, unfortunately, happens all too often. For sport, open to all, which is the only way to develop the kind of winners we in unison celebrated yesterday, celebrate today and will celebrate tomorrow. And also for the smooth and independent operation of the media and all other independent bodies and institutions. The more of us who are bound by thoughts of brotherhood, the easier it will be for all of us to do our jobs and help shape our country – exactly as we want and deserve it.*

*Only professionalism in all areas leads to work being done in a professional and quality manner. Professionalism is the basis for self-confidence, which Slovenia very much needs if it wants to be heard and successful in representing our interests in the international community. Slovenia enjoys a good reputation in the international community because it has not conquered others and does not have a colonial past. Today we continue to carefully cultivate friendly relations with countries, particularly our neighbours. That is why I have already visited all four neighbouring countries. I have had open, frank discussions with the leaders of these countries, including on issues where we disagree and on issues whose resolution requires additional efforts.*

*The power of argument, not the argument of power: this is the principle we must follow. I strongly condemn and reject violence in international relations. I reject war as a way of resolving disagreements – everywhere, including in Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a despicable act. Not only because it is an outrageous violation of international law. But also because the aggression is being carried out by a country which, by virtue of its permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, should be the first to ensure international peace and security – as it did during the Second World War, when we were allies in the fight against fascism and Nazism. As a new non-permanent member of the Security Council, Slovenia will constantly draw attention to this.*

*The post-conflict reconstruction period, however, will not be important only for Ukraine. When it comes to faith in democracy and fundamental human rights, the situation in Europe is not good. Public sentiment in the Member States of the European Union does not suggest that things will improve in the near future. Quite the contrary! The manifestations of extremism and the spread of hatred are trampling the dignity of every human being. Unfortunately, the uncertainty we are witnessing after the latest events in the Russian Federation is taking us even further away from efforts to return to a stable Europe and stability in the world.*

*At least for Slovenia, I can say – and I am proud of this – that we voters have always recognised when we were edging dangerously close to the path of extremism and dangerous departures from the values that we have won and enshrined in the Constitution. Everyone loses from radicalisation, and the European Union certainly loses. Autocratic leaders want a divided and fractured Europe. We see this in the case of Russia. Extremist and populist politicians simply do not want to see the importance of the broader picture. They talk publicly about the interests of their countries, but while doing so, they seem to forget the interests of the people who live in their countries. A country is its people, not just a handful of leaders.*

*The broader picture is this: Europe has no choice. It must be a respected player on the world's diplomatic stage and represent clearly defined values. Otherwise, we will be on our own. We will deal with our differences – while the superpowers go their own way. In the dance of the superpowers, a divided and therefore powerless Europe would have no chance of asserting its interests: this applies to large and small countries alike. Europe will survive as a respected player only by standing firmly by its values. These are, let me remind you, the values on which post-war Europe is founded: human rights and democracy as a way of life. The challenges to both are too many, and we will have to tackle them together, by seeking consensus and acting wisely.*

*Artificial intelligence, for example, can be an exceptional tool in efforts to tackle current and future challenges. But if it ends up in the wrong hands, it can lead to misinformation and distortions of reality. Artificial intelligence is a product of human intelligence, but it should not replace it. If this happens – what will we be left with? So let it not be the problem, but part of the solution.*

*Multilateralism must be given a second chance. In all areas of activity of international organisations, and in holding multinational companies accountable by ensuring that they contribute their fair share of earnings to the common good of us all. Profit simply cannot be accepted as the only measure of success and action. The measure of*

*success today and in the future will be not only economic growth figures, but also the success of efforts to tackle global problems such as climate change, food security, and ageing populations. In the future, the essential value will be to have less, but better, not to have more. To have less so that there is more for those who come after us. For the children and young people to whom we will leave this planet. They should be taken into account as part of the solution every day, not just when they are loud in their efforts to draw attention to this issue. At my request, a distinguished environmentalist and friend of Slovenia will also speak at the end of the celebration on how we can all contribute together to a better environment.*

*Dear Citizens,  
Dear Residents of the Republic of Slovenia,  
Esteemed Guests,*

*You know me. I am the President, but first and foremost – Nataša. I will not let this be taken away from me. As Nataša, I know and feel that only a country that is not burdened by the past can direct all its energy towards the future. And we must be well prepared for it. We must all be ready as a team in Slovenia, working as one, where everyone knows their tasks, and where everyone is expected to be responsible. Everyone is also expected to make a fair contribution to our common, dignified future, in all our diversity.*

*That is why we must move forward. Only forward. The new must be faced, understood and mastered for our common benefit. We must learn to listen to each other and to agree on measures and policies that will cover everything I have spoken about. And which can really be summed up in just two words: human dignity.*

*Thank you all, and sincere congratulations on the occasion of Statehood Day.*