



President of the Republic of Slovenia

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar
to the European Parliament,**

Brussels, 21. 5. 2025

Madam President,

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me, as President of the Republic of Slovenia, to address this distinguished assembly for the first time – the very heart of democracy in the European Union. Today's visit is both a personal commitment and a reflection of my country's steadfast dedication to the European project and the shared values upon which it is built: peace, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The European Parliament plays a unique and vital role in this context: as the directly elected representatives of Europe's citizens, you embody the diversity of our Union and serve as the cornerstone of democratic legitimacy in European decision-making. Your role is more crucial today than ever before, in light of the many challenges we face. Above all, the European Parliament must continue to play a key role in maintaining and strengthening public trust in our shared European project.

Honourable Members,

We live in a time of profound uncertainty, and once again, the Union finds itself at a crossroads. We are confronted with a cascade of crises and challenges – from Russia's aggression against Ukraine to the consequences of conflict in the Middle East. We are also facing trade wars, climate change, migration pressures, energy insecurity and, to an extent, the unpredictable ramifications of a new technological revolution – driven in part by the extraordinarily rapid and as yet unregulated development of artificial intelligence. Amidst these external pressures, we must not neglect our internal responsibilities: reforming the functioning of the EU, strengthening societal resilience, and safeguarding our competitiveness, cohesion and – above all – our unity. None of these crises or challenges is merely a threat. Each of them is also an opportunity to demonstrate who we are as Europeans, and whether we can act and respond together. In the past, whenever the European Union has faced major challenges, it has always shown that it has the ability and capacity to find common ground and take decisive steps in pursuit of collective action.

We must respond to the crises of our time with solidarity, unity and determination. We need more Europe, not less. We need a connected, strategically focused and more sovereign European Union – one that can protect its values and interests, while remaining a place of freedom, justice and opportunity. No European country – large or small – can respond effectively alone to the many challenges that stretch far beyond national borders. In this context, common European action is not only a necessity, it is our greatest asset. I believe that it is this shared European path that will ensure our long-term stability and development.

In these unpredictable times, I would like to underline in particular the importance of EU unity. We must speak with one voice, for only then will we be stronger, more persuasive and more effective. If we fail to do so, we risk displaying weakness and allowing the erosion of what the European Union has always stood for: democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Allow me now to highlight some of the key themes. Starting with the **enlargement of the European Union**, which remains one of our most successful and powerful tools for fostering peace, democracy and prosperity in Europe. In this respect, Slovenia stands as a positive example. We are a country that underwent transition, implemented successful reforms and joined the EU in 2004. We therefore understand what it means to embrace the European perspective. Membership of the European Union has brought us social stability, economic growth, greater international visibility and a sense of security and belonging to a wider European family, which offers many advantages that we all know well – even if we sometimes take them for granted.

Today we want the same for the countries of the Western Balkans, for Ukraine and Moldova, and – we hope, in the future – also for the people of Georgia. The European future of these countries is also in our strategic interest, for this reason, Slovenia strongly supports the accession of as many countries as possible to the European Union by 2030.

Enlargement, which must be based on the candidate countries' own achievements and consistently implemented reforms, is not only a geopolitical imperative – as the absence of a European presence strengthens the influence of other global actors – but also a moral obligation to uphold the commitments made by the European Union. Each new step towards enlargement offers hope that citizens may be able to live with dignity, work and fulfil their aspirations in their homelands.

Slovenia is actively engaged in sharing knowledge and experience and supporting reforms in candidate countries, and is a strong advocate of enlargement to the Western Balkans, recognising the transformative power of the process for a region that is vital to the security and stability of the entire continent. Slovenia has also offered assistance to the Western Balkan countries on their path to EU membership and stands ready to continue doing so. However, enlargement must not only serve the interests of the candidate countries – it must also be in the interest of the Member States. It is in the EU's geographical, political, economic and above all - security interest that the countries of the Western Balkan join the EU as swiftly as possible.

But enlargement cannot proceed without also strengthening the Union from within. This includes enhancing the effectiveness of our institutions, improving decision-making processes, modernising and adapting our policies, and maintaining an unwavering commitment to the rule of law and fundamental rights. These are the conditions that will allow us to remain a strong and successful political community – one that is ready to welcome new members. To be prepared for the expansion of our European family, we must ensure both the institutional and financial capacity to do so – making the negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework all the more important – and remain mindful of the importance of our foundations. A lot more needs to be done – both at the national and European level – to raise awareness among citizens of the Member States of the many advantages of enlargement.

At the same time, we need to strengthen **our global competitiveness** if we are to catch up with other world regions and leading economies, particularly in today's environment of increasing barriers to a rules-based open multilateral trading system and intensifying competition among the major powers. The single market is one of our greatest assets, and we must continue to deepen it while maintaining a business-friendly environment. Only a strong European economy can ensure jobs, European social models, social justice, quality education, a thriving culture and – through all this – sustainable development and a high quality of life for Europe's citizens. The European Union must unite around a clear vision for economic development, as outlined, among other things, in the report prepared by Mario Draghi. This will help us reduce economic dependence, including through measures aimed at ensuring economic security, strengthening European industry, promoting advanced technologies, easing burdens and simplifying regulation.

At the same time, we must be proactive in driving the digital transition and green transformation – not as a mere response to crises, but as a forward-looking investment in the future. Climate action must still go hand in hand with other measures to boost competitiveness. The devastating floods that struck Slovenia in August 2023 are just one of many reminders of why the EU must remain a leading force in international climate negotiations if we are to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

It is time to harness our full potential and establish Europe as a global hub of knowledge and entrepreneurship, which will require significantly greater investment in research, development and innovation. Slovenia is committed to promoting an open, technology-driven, environmentally friendly and knowledge-based economy. In doing so, we are guided by the European social model and the active participation of citizens in shaping development processes. We believe that within this framework we must foster opportunities for the younger generations who will shape Europe's future, and that it is our shared responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind in these transitions.

The way in which artificial intelligence continues to develop will also play an increasingly important role in Europe's competitiveness. If we want AI to be at the service of people and society, we must develop it on the basis of ethical standards, transparency and human rights. In this context, I believe that the world's first Artificial Intelligence Act is a step in the right direction – but our collective effort has only just begun.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the European Parliament,

In light of growing geopolitical tensions, it is clear that we must strengthen our **strategic autonomy in the fields of security and defence**. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, hybrid threats, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns that threaten the security of our democratic processes through foreign interference in electoral processes, economic pressures and threats to our energy security all undoubtedly demand a swift and coordinated response and the enhancement of our own defence and security capabilities. Above all, they require a comprehensive approach: one that builds resilience across society as a whole and strengthens our capacity to respond to crises – including in areas such as health, migration, technological security, climate and the economy.

It is clear that we must become more self-reliant in security and defence, so that we are able to act independently whenever the protection of our interests and values demands it. At the same time, close cooperation with our strategic partners remains essential – despite all uncertainties. It is also an opportunity to reinforce the European pillar within NATO and to deepen our cooperation both with NATO and with other partners with whom we share our common values.

Europe must become the guardian of its own future. The world as we knew it until recently is changing – or, in some cases, disappearing altogether. The European Union therefore needs a clear direction and a bold vision for its **role in the world**. In this context, Slovenia will continue to work actively in support of a more united, more decisive, more effective and more engaged Common Foreign and Security Policy.

A world where international law prevails, where human rights are respected and conflicts are resolved peacefully is in all our interests. At a time when international institutions are under intense pressure, we as a union must reaffirm our commitment to **a multilateral order** based on the integration and complementarity of peace and security, development, the environment and human rights, which remains grounded in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. In its role as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Slovenia is committed to playing a proactive role in addressing issues of international peace and security, guided by the principles and fundamental values of the EU.

Members of the European Parliament,

When it comes to our responsibility and our role in the world, I cannot overlook the wars in **Ukraine** and the **Middle East**. In response to the aggression by the Russian Federation, we as the European Union have shown a united response in support of Ukraine, in continuing assistance and in our commitment to a just and lasting peace, grounded in international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and acceptable to Ukraine. I sincerely hope that we will continue to play our role as a relevant actor, standing by Ukraine, because its future is crucial for that of our European continent.

Slovenia seeks a peaceful and stable European neighbourhood. It is therefore committed to greater European involvement in addressing the situation in the **Middle East**, where the war in Gaza is at the centre, but where there has also been a sharp increase in violence in the West Bank and beyond, including in the barely stable Syria and Lebanon. In this regard, the European Union has unfortunately been too divided and ineffective on the international stage. In addition to upholding international law – including humanitarian law – our central objective must remain the swift cessation of hostilities, to put an end to the bloodshed and unnecessary suffering in unbearable humanitarian conditions, and to move towards the implementation of the two-state solution, where Slovenia views the recognition of Palestine as a step towards lasting peace.

You may believe me when I say that the events in the Middle East often rob me of sleep. What can a small country do? What can the European Union do? Sometimes it feels like nothing—or at least not enough. Yes, much lies in the hands of a global superpower. But let's be honest. I will allow myself to say this here, in the European Parliament: What we are witnessing in Gaza is genocide. We are watching ... and we remain silent.

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

I believe that all our Member States have, at some point, experienced the meaning of **solidarity**. Earlier I mentioned the devastating floods, when the people of Slovenia truly felt the European Union standing with us. I would therefore like to conclude my address with the message that the European Union is not a system distant from its citizens, as it is sometimes portrayed, but a community that knows how to listen and to help, and one that we build together. After all, the very idea of European integration was based on solidarity, and it should remain so.

Honourable Members of the European Parliament, yesterday we marked World Bee Day, which has been celebrated since 2018, when the United Nations adopted an initiative led by Slovenia. This day is not only a reminder of the vital role of pollinators for the balance of life – for both people and nature – but also a symbolic reminder of the importance of our interdependence. Europe, for example, can only preserve its role in an increasingly complex international environment, and ensure the security and well-being of its citizens, through the joint efforts of its Member States and institutions, through solidarity and responsible action.

The times we live in demand courage, vision and cooperation. The values that we stand for in this Chamber must not be taken for granted. We must keep defending them, time and again. And that is why I believe in the power of the European Union – because it brings us together to find common solutions and enables us to protect our way of life together.

Let our guiding principle be that together, we can achieve more. For a Europe of the future – one that is strong, resilient, united and built on solidarity.

Thank you.