

# Speech at the 20th anniversary of the Hungarian Atlantic Council

Stefánia, October 5, 2012

Dear Madame Ambassador. Dear Mr President. Distinguished audience. Ladies and Gentlemen.

We all came here together to celebrate and to remember. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Hungarian Atlantic Council: a mission completed in an exemplary manner and work performed with success. To remember everything what we have done together and what we have been through together. To remember and to remind ourselves the reason why we have done all this.

20 years is a long time, as our forefathers used to say: a whole generation. The world has changed a lot since that time. The youth of our generation went by here in Hungary and Central Eastern Europe under the dictatorship of the existing socialism. We placed our hope, which was many times excessive and not free of illusions, in winning the freedom defined and lived through in the Atlantic world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union it was self-evident that the free Hungary turned towards the Atlantic world and NATO: it is because our interests and values were the same and we share them also today: common security built on the granite foundation of freedom.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

The original mission of the Hungarian Atlantic Council was to promote Hungary's accession to NATO, to popularize the Euro-Atlantic values and principles. It was also due to the work of the Hungarian Atlantic Council that in the accession referendum the share of votes in favor of joining came to 85%, which was an extremely significant achievement even at that time.

The Council has not lost its significance after Hungary's accession either, although its activities have undoubtedly changed: on the one hand its primary task has become the broad-based popularization of NATO, the dissemination of credible relevant information, and on the other hand, the promotion among the Euro-Atlantic countries. In the world undergoing extremely rapid changes, where new and newer crisis spots crop up very quickly, the strengthening of the transatlantic relations and popularization of the Atlantic thought are today more timely and topical tasks than any time before.

The European NATO allies struggle with the economic crisis -clearly, this has also an impact on the defense sphere: the funds available for the development of defense capabilities are much more restricted than earlier. This further widens the capability gap between the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean. At the same time, while emphasizing the importance of the alliance with Europe, the

global attention of the United States is increasingly diverted to the Pacific region as this is so demanded by the political and economic interests of the US.

The promotion of the Euro-Atlantic principles and values, the reinforcement of the trans-Atlantic cooperation considered to be the foundation of the European security have an even greater significance in this political environment.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is Hungary's interest that this community, which advocates identical values, has as many members as possible. Therefore, from the beginnings we have supported the continuing enlargement of the Alliance, primarily, the accession of the countries in our direct neighborhood, as a contribution to the stability of our region and thereby of the entire Euro-Atlantic area. A significant role shall be borne also by the Hungarian Atlantic Council in disseminating the ideology of Atlanticism also to the partners.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

NATO is a huge system, with the objective, task, mission and purpose to guarantee security for the members of the Alliance, for the Atlantic world. For everyone, with no exceptions: one for all, all

for one!

It is a great task and everyone has one part to solve. The task we are working on is the same, only the roles are different. Hungary and the Hungarian Defense Forces are fully committed to serving the cause of the Alliance in the missions and appreciates very much all the assistance it receives from its allies and above all from the United States of America. Our country is also committed that in line with the growth of its economic capabilities it reinforces its armed forces and equips them in accordance with the requirements of modern defense technology.

The geopolitical situation has changed a lot over the past twenty years, however, our trans-Atlantic commitment has remained unchanged during all that time. Membership in the Alliance continues to mean the guarantee for security, which has no alternative.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

„Remembering the past is the commitment to the future” – said Pope John Paul the 2nd. A new generation of politicians has grown up and come on the scene over the past 20 years and gradually they take their place at the world's great discussion tables to participate in finding solutions for the new problems of new eras.

For us, who imagine our future together in the Atlantic world must remember the road we have walked along together. We must remember in order to know: we can count on each other. We can rely upon each other in the joint work of the everyday life and also in the decisive moments of history.

The mission of the Hungarian Atlantic Council is not over. May I wish you all that the Council well serves this great mission in the next 20 years, over the new generation.