A year ago, when I addressed you at the previous reception on the National Independence Day and the Day of the Polish Armed Forces,

I expressed hope that when we meet again on such an occasion, we would enjoy peace in Europe.

Unfortunately, Russian aggression against Ukraine is not over and our courageous neighbours are still suffering from the brutal invasion.

The war raging right on our doorstep reminds us that freedom and independence, restoration of which in 1918 we are commemorating today, are not guaranteed to be obtained once and forever. Rather, independence and the feeling of safety are treasures that must be carefully guarded and cared for.

These days my country is the subject of the unprecedented hybrid warfare exercised by Russia and its Belarussian proxies. Aggressive espionage, disinformation, cyberattacks, weaponization of illegal migrants, subversive operations aiming to influence public opinion, as well as arsons and other overt acts of sabotage. These include examples as extreme as preparations to derail trains and to disrupt air traffic. All of this has become our everyday routine. There is no doubt - Poland is a frontline country and if we do not want to allow another partition or occupation to happen – and we don’t – we have to build military capacities strong enough to discourage our enemies from any attempt to touch our land or to deprive us of our freedom.

We will not let any hostile power overwhelm us, as we have a lot to fight for. During World War Two, just 20 years after the restoration of the Polish statehood, the invasion of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union ruined everything that has been built after 123 years of partition and foreign domination. After the fall of Communism, Polish people have done the job of several generations in just 30 years. We will not allow this hard work to go to waste. We will defend our modern highways and great sport stadiums, our clean and comfortable cities, our cozy towns and villages, our welfare system and decent standard of living, achieved thanks to the tremendous efforts of our whole nation. We will also defend our democracy and civil liberties which so badly irritate the satraps from the East.

We believe in the might of the North Atlantic Alliance, but our position is that each member should constantly increase its contribution for the benefit of both its own and common security. Poland allocates 4.3% of its GDP to defense and in 2025 these expenses will rise to 5%. Our goal is to have the strongest land army in Europe, with 300 thousand soldiers and 1000 modern tanks, supported by the long-range artillery systems, an Air Force with at least 200 state-of-the-art fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, and a Navy that is currently procuring new frigates, mine hunters and submarines. The eastern border, which serves to protect not only Poland but all of Europe, is being turned into a row of sophisticated technical barriers and solid fortifications capable of stopping any attack.

We are not doing this with the aim of threatening anybody, as Polish people know the price of peace, appreciate it and want to live in it. However, compliance, compromise and de-escalation at all costs are by no way the guarantees of a safe and peaceful future. That is why a top priority of the Polish Presidency of the EU Council will be security in all its dimensions. The only correct response to any threat, to any blackmail, to any attempt of intimidation is: Do not dare!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Polish people have always appreciated, respected and loved their army, their soldiers who for centuries were, and still are true to the words of the military oath: “I swear I will not spare neither my blood nor my life for the Fatherland’s cause”.

Our history and our geographical location mean that we cannot afford neither naive pacifism nor the false sense of stability and peace.

The 1990s led the Western World to disarmament and made it an easy target for Russia, which never abandoned its imperial ambitions.

The Euroatlantic community should draw conclusions from mistakes of the past, so we are and we will be demanding for the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 to be officially announced null and void, because this shameful and humiliating document has been violated by Russia countless times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now address, in a few words in both languages respectively, our Croatian guests and members of the Polish community:

***Poštovani gosti, hrvatski prijatelji Poljske,***

***Drago mi je da mogu biti domaćin prijema povodom Dana nacionalne nezavisnosti i Praznika poljskih Oružanih snaga. Izuzetno pa mi je drago što mogu ugostiti današnju svečanost upravo ovdje, u Hrvatskoj, gdje ljudi dobro razumiju što znače suverena država i vlastita vojska, te zašto je tako važno i potrebno poštovanje prema svojoj zemlji, zastavi i tradiciji.***

***Još uvijek su svježe uspomene na strahovitu cijenu koju je tijekom Domovinskog rata vaš narod plaćao za svoju slobodnu Hrvatsku.***

***Neki od vas već znaju da je jedna od mojih omiljenih hrvatskih pjesama ona „Od stoljeća sedmog”, koja kaže da „Što se krvlju brani, ne pušta se lako”. To bi mogla biti i naša, poljska pjesma.***

***Drago mi je što smo saveznici i što će se uskoro hrvatski vojnici vratiti na položaje na istočnom krilu NATO-a, da se vijore zajedno boje naše zastave i hrvatske šahovnice - bijela i crvena. Hvala vam i budite sigurni da možete računati na nas!***

***Szanowni Państwo,***

***Bardzo się cieszę, widząc jak licznie przybyliście na tę uroczystość. Dziękuję Wam za dzisiejszą obecność i za wszystko, co robicie dla naszego kraju, budując pozytywny wizerunek i dobre imię Polski. Rocznica odzyskania niepodległości to bowiem nie tylko wspomnienie niezwykle ważnego, zwrotnego wręcz momentu w naszej historii. To nie wielka polityka ani zacisze dyplomatycznych gabinetów. Wolność, pomyślność i siłę Ojczyzny tworzy się każdego dnia – pracując, ucząc się – i ucząc innych, co podkreślam chyląc głowę przed Paniami Lektorkami, prowadząc przedsiębiorstwa, zachęcając chorwackich przyjaciół i sąsiadów do odwiedzenia Polski, poświęcając swój wolny czas na przygotowywanie spotkań i występów artystycznych służących podtrzymaniu tradycji i narodowej tożsamości.***

***Cieszmy się zatem tym świętem, bądźmy dumni z Polski i z tego, co osiągnęła, również z naszym – choćby drobnym – udziałem.***

***Chwała Rzeczypospolitej!***