

Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs
on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2024

Mr President, Mr Speaker, Mr Prime Minister, Members of the House, Ladies and Gentlemen, Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Resuming the duties of Minister of Foreign Affairs, I said that “diplomacy is the first line of defence of our Republic.” The overarching goal of any foreign policy is to ensure a state’s security, understood as its guaranteed survival and development. Behind our eastern border, Ukraine’s war has entered a third year. It is a war against an aggressor bent not only on destroying Ukraine’s independence. Russia seeks to overthrow the entire international order that emerged after 1989: the logic of law and voluntary alliances of equal partners is to be replaced with the logic of force, spheres of influence, and diktat of superpowers. Vladimir Putin is quite open about it.

Poland is already facing various forms of hybrid aggression, such as planting disinformation, carrying out cyberattacks, exploiting energy dependencies, and instrumentalising migration pressure.

In such difficult circumstances, cooperation is needed not only within the ruling coalition but also with those opposition politicians who are willing to cooperate. Ahead of his joint US visit with President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote: “We may have different political views with President Andrzej Duda on almost everything but when it comes to our Homeland’s security we must, and we will, act together. Not only at this time of our visit to America.” And that is how we work.

Our offer of working together is not only for politicians. This address is intended for citizens. All of them. The security of our community should unite us.

But for an agreement to be possible, we must stand in the truth.

The previous eight years of Poland's foreign policy were marked by a whole series of misguided policy assumptions, bad ideas, poor decisions and omissions. Let me mention just a few of the most glaring ones:

- engaging in chronic conflict with European Union institutions over the politicization of the independent judiciary and, consequently, incurring not only huge financial losses but above all the loss of credibility and prestige;
- allowing Poland to be sidelined in major debates within the EU and NATO;
- disrupting relations with Poland's neighbours and important partners: with Germany, France, Czechia and, to some extent, even with Ukraine despite our key role in assisting the country;
- making miscalculations about an alliance with the US against the European Union and undermining trust in Poland on both sides of the Atlantic;
- forming an ideological alliance with pro-Putin populists;
- cash-for-visa scandal, or in fact an uncontrolled inflow of migrants into Poland—a phenomenon which was not preceded by any public debate but accompanied by foreigner-baiting;
- dismantling the MFA as a foreign policy hub and degrading the prestige of a professional, apolitical foreign service.

The deterioration of Poland's image during the Law and Justice governments is best illustrated by independent rankings. According to Reporters without Borders, Poland in 2014 ranked 19th on the World Press Freedom Index among 180 countries. In 2023, we plunged to the 57th position, followed by Burkina Faso, Papua New Guinea, and Guyana. In a 2015 rule of law ranking by World Justice Project, Poland came 21st, just after the United States and Czechia. In 2023 we went down to 36th. According to the Corruption Perception Index which scores countries from the least to the most corrupt, Poland ranked 29th in 2015. In 2023 we were trailing at 47. One could provide many examples like these.

As St Augustine said, "It is human to err, but it is devilish to remain wilfully in error." The previous government's wilfulness resulted from the fact that it pursued its foreign policy in a "world of projections": an imaginary space built on myths and illusions sustained by pushy propaganda. Let's look at six most important of these:

The **first myth** concerned the European Union. We joined it after years of effort and following a decision taken by the People in a two-day referendum, with endorsement and blessing from a Polish Pope.

The European Union is an area of security and economic development which the vast majority of Polish citizens want to be part of. But not so for our predecessors. For them, it is an “imagined community,” a “heartless Brussels,” and a place from which anonymous bureaucrats allegedly impose sovereignty-depriving directives on Poland. A system that is claimed to be a camouflage for the same as ever dominance of the strong. Zdzisław Krasnodębski of the Law and Justice party, a member of the European Parliament and a Professor of Germany’s University of Bremen, even said that, quote, “the threat to our sovereignty from the West is greater than from the East.” He said that in August 2022, when Putin had been for several months bombarding Ukraine’s cities. Sejm member Marek Suski, another Law and Justice intellectual, compared our presence in the European Union to German and Soviet occupation. Minister Przemysław Czarnek argued that—quote again—“we have reached a worse level in Europe than that under the Soviet Union and Communism.” Such comparisons are not only an insult to common sense. It is like dishonouring the graves of Poles, the victims of the Soviet Union, who dreamed about a Poland that is free, democratic and rooted in Latin civilisation. Does the EU really look like the USSR to you? How many million deaths does it have on its conscience?

No wonder that a European policy based on such intellectual foundations came down mostly to negative tactics: blocking, vetoing, and breaching or ignoring EU law.

When asked about the EU’s future, government ministers and members of the Sejm replied that it should only be a loosely associated area of free trade. But when we were dealing with the consequences of the pandemic or today, when the war is going on in Ukraine, the same people are demanding more effective action from Europe. Free trade areas do not spend billions of euros on mutual assistance, do not buy weapons, and do not impose sanctions on a war-provoking aggressor. Ladies and Gentlemen, please, make up your mind: what do you really want?

Over the years, we have heard that decisions in the EU are being imposed on us by the so-called “Eurocrats.” This lie, repeated over and over again in the UK, eventually led to Brexit. The EU does not impose anything on us because it just may not do so. Any new

rules must be accepted by the European Parliament and the Member States, including Poland.

So who are those Eurocrats?

Are the members of the European Parliament Eurocrats? After all, they did not land there out of nowhere. They were elected by universal suffrage, and usually received more votes than is the case with elections to the Sejm. Or maybe the President of the European Commission is one? I would like to remind you that she was elected to that position by the European Parliament. She was also supported by Law and Justice politicians, or at least that's what they said. Or perhaps EU Commissioner for Agriculture, proposed to the Commission by Law and Justice, is a Eurocrat? And if it isn't him, then maybe it's his staff? That European funds should be linked to the rule of law, the refugee relocation mechanism, and the Green Deal was something agreed on by the European Council made up of the heads of Member States' governments. In 2016–2023, Poland was represented in the European Council by Prime Ministers Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki. They are not here with us today because Prime Minister Beata Szydło, who had the EU flag, which they called "a rag," removed from the Prime Minister's Chancellery, is now serving with disgust in the "Yevroparlament." And, Mr Speaker, please excuse the absence of Sejm member Mateusz Morawiecki, who has better things to do today—as I understand, he is now on his way to Budapest to attend another rally of pro-Putin nationalists.

Myth number two originates from the misunderstood definition of sovereignty. Sovereignty is something of great value, especially for nations which—like Poles—were long deprived of it. But our predecessors would see sovereignty under attack on all fronts. Its defence was supposed to exhaust the foreign policy agenda.

A limited sovereignty is a very serious thing, something we know well from history. We used to have a constitution the text of which—still kept in the Sejm's archives, I presume—was revised by Joseph Stalin himself. Had we then wanted to leave the Eastern bloc, we could have met the same fate as the Hungarians in 1956. On the other hand, British Europhobes have finally proved that it is possible to leave the EU peacefully and no one is holding anyone by force. This is the best proof of the sovereignty of the EU's nation-states. The European Union is a community whose members voluntarily pool certain aspects of sovereignty for greater benefit. But they do not lose their sovereignty by doing so. It is not a conspiracy of elites but a win-win agreement.

Another, **third myth**, is that any benefits of EU membership can only be measured by the money transfers from the EU's budget. Indeed, billions of euros from the Cohesion Fund and for the implementation of the National Recovery Plan are obviously quite substantial. They will allow Poland to complete its modernisation project. But the EU is something much more than just cash transfers. As a Member State, Poland is considered a stable and predictable country, and a good investment destination. And even if we become a net contributor over time, the benefits of being part of the EU will still outweigh the costs, as we are talking not only about cash transfers but also security, participation in the European market, freedom to travel and settle, and development opportunities. This is why it is so important that Poland rejoins the group of countries that make up Europe rather than those that defend themselves against it.

In any mythology, you need a bad guy to vent negative emotions and pin all ills upon. In Law and Justice mythology, Germany served this purpose. This is **myth number four**.

Obviously, the interests of Poland and Germany are not the same. Germany long held an attitude towards Russia which was different from Poland's and—in our view—opportunistic. On a number of issues, Poland's current ruling coalition takes different positions from those of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. We have our distinct histories and distinct social, economic and security concerns. Still, differences of opinion do not mean that we are doomed to perpetual conflict. Germany is our democratic neighbour and largest trading partner, an important European actor, and a key NATO ally. Warsaw and Berlin need each other.

However, instead of using this interdependence to strengthen Poland's position, the path of confrontation was chosen. Law and Justice mythology pushed us into a pattern of historical determinism. We had tragic experiences with Germany in the past. But that does not mean our relationship must remain foul for ever. This government prefers the words of my great predecessor, Minister Bartoszewski, who—in 1995, or 50 years after the war—thus addressed Germany's Bundestag members: “Historical memory and reflection must accompany our relations. However, historical memory and reflection should not be the main motivation for them but should rather pave the way for modern, future-oriented motivations.”

An aversion to Germany was also a consequence of an aversion to the West as such. The previous coalition would portray it—exactly like the Kremlin's propaganda—not as a

community governed by the rule of law and civil liberties but as a source of moral rot threatening the Polish people. This is **myth number five**. Western countries face challenges some of which are of their own making; some of their social and cultural norms are undergoing rapid change, and disputes about what is morally acceptable can get intense there. There is nothing new about it. Similar issues, for example about women's voting rights, the status of sexual minorities, and the role of the Church in public life, were being debated by the right and the left 30, 50 or 100 years ago. Democratic Poland's free society is undergoing similar transformation, at its own pace. But the mythical, corrupt West is not—in my opinion—the greatest threat to traditional values. That threat is the hypocrisy of many among the alleged defenders of those values.

Finally, **myth number six**, i.e. the belief that Poland needs to choose between close relations with its European partners and cooperation with the United States. No, it does not! Poland's growth and security must be based on two pillars: transatlantic cooperation—continued independently of American voters' decisions—and European integration. Not only is there no contradiction between these two strands of action. Indeed, they complement each other. Good relations with the United States make Poland stronger in Europe, while initiative in the EU and good relations with our neighbours make us a more attractive partner in the eyes of US allies and investors.

In both these fields, Poland's foreign policy should be characterised not by outcries of dissent towards some and submission towards others but by **creative assertiveness**. As a country, we do have our interests, reasons, and arguments, we have our own achievements and we believe in our strengths. We will protect them, effectively. However, not by banging a shoe on the desk like one Soviet dignitary, but by winning partners over and proposing solutions. And sometimes by saying “no.” But without clamour.

To the really patriotic opposition I suggest a novel model of dispute. You have found out that the worst thing to do is to believe in one's own propaganda. Reject these myths.

Members of the House,

This year marks 25 years since Poland joined NATO and 20 years since its accession to the European Union. We also celebrate the 35th anniversary of the major breakthrough of 1989. Over these 35 years, Poland has become a European democracy. And on 15 October 2023, we showed to the world that Polish men and women will not let their freedom be taken away. We have been successful; we have built a country that our forefathers dreamed about. There is still room for improvement—as regards poverty, exclusion, creating equal opportunities. No responsible person denies that. The question is what we will do together with the achievements of the past 35 years and the challenges of the future.

I believe that we now have four urgent tasks ahead of us:

1. Firstly, **a safe Poland**. Poland's *raison d'état* dictates that we should develop our own defence resources and allied capabilities to deter aggression. It also dictates that we should provide maximum military and political support to Ukraine. It is clearly in Poland's interest to keep the aggressor as far as possible from our borders. This is why a sovereign Ukraine must win this war and a peaceful international order must be restored in Europe. The transatlantic alliance with the leading role of the United States remains the cornerstone of Poland's security. Our goal is to maintain and strengthen US engagement in Europe while strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance in the spirit of strategic harmony between NATO and the European Union. This leads us to the second priority, that is
2. **A strong Poland in a strong European Union**. Since the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the European Union has transformed into a geopolitical entity, capable of projecting onto its surroundings not only its economic clout, but also political and military one. It is in the interest of Poland to facilitate and contribute to this process. It is necessary to shift into higher gear in our development. The time of our advantages as a country of cheap labour force and cheap energy came to an end. Poland can and must become a developed country, competitive thanks to Polish inventiveness, good organisation, cultural appeal, openness to the world. I'm addressing these words particularly to a group of students from my former High School No. 1 in Bydgoszcz who are present with us today—together we lay

the foundations of Poland as a safe, prosperous country that offers not only a unique tradition and culture but also truly European standards of work, education, life, and health.

3. Thirdly, **an active and reliable Poland in the global community**. We want to be a country that not only benefits from international cooperation but is also ready to shoulder its share of responsibility for global challenges.
4. Fourthly and finally, **the reconstruction of a professional and apolitical foreign service** and restoration of the MFA's statutory role as the centre that shapes Poland's foreign policy.

Members of the House,

Today, nearly 80 years after defeating Nazi Germany, a war is once again taking place in Europe. Contrary to Russian propaganda, the reason why Ukraine was attacked was not because of threats posed by NATO or the West. What really prevents the Kremlin from implementing its imperial plans are the values and standards we represent and stand up for: democracy, the accountability of authorities to citizens, the fight against corruption. What horrifies the Russian authorities is that these values appeal also to many citizens of the former Soviet Union.

Vladimir Putin evokes mythical and centuries-old stories to justify the claims that Russia makes to the territories of its neighbours. If all politicians wanted to use this logic in practice, no existing country would retain its present shape. After two world wars we laid down the principle of the inviolability of borders precisely to put a stop to such destructive, pseudohistorical claims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The total population of NATO and EU member states is over 920 million people, whereas Russia, even when considered together with Belarus, is inhabited by only 153 million citizens, that is six times less. The nominal gross domestic product of NATO and EU countries is over USD 45 trillion, whereas the total GDP of Russia and Belarus is merely

USD 2.2 trillion, that is 20 times less. In 2022, 15 NATO states that were most active in supporting Ukraine spent over USD 1.17 trillion for defence purposes, whereas Russia spent only USD 86.4 billion, which is 14 times less. After the first wave of mobilization, Russia had slightly over 1.3 million military personnel. NATO's military personnel, without additional mobilization, is over 3.5 million persons, i.e. nearly three times as much. The number of NATO aircraft is three times the number of aircraft in service with the Russian army. The Alliance has at its disposal four times as many warships and three times as many submarine units as Russia.

Therefore it is not us, the West, that should fear a clash with Putin but the other way round. This should be reiterated, not to fuel a sense of threat among Russians, because NATO is a defence alliance, but to show that Russia's attack against any member of the Alliance would result in Russia's inevitable defeat. Russia's military and economic potential pales in comparison with the potential of the West. If we do not lose our willpower, Russia will be defeated.

Putin's only hope is our lack of determination.

Ukraine has the right to shape its future in an independent and sovereign manner as well as within its internationally recognised borders.

Russia lies about Poland's alleged plans to annex fragments of Ukraine. Donbas is Ukraine. Crimea is Ukraine. Lviv, Volhynia, and former Eastern Galicia are also Ukraine. That is why I want to reiterate it so that it will be heard also in the Kremlin: *Львів – це Україна!* (L'viv tse Ukrayina!).

Russian leaders and propagandists want to drive a wedge between us and Ukrainians. This plan will not work. They will lose also on this front.

Since the Russian attack against Ukraine, Poland has approved 44 packages of military assistance for Kyiv. The total value of Polish government assistance, without taking account of the multi-billion sums spent on supporting refugees, amounted to about USD 4.5 billion during the first two years of the war. At the end of last year, over 950,000 Ukrainians were provided with permanent shelter in our country, i.e. one which granted them an active PESEL (personal identification) number. The actual number of Ukrainian citizens staying in Poland or visiting our country temporarily after 24 February 2022 is of course several times higher. Many of them, just after the war broke out, found shelter

under the roof of Polish families. I would like to thank millions of Polish people who were so kind-hearted towards those in need. At the critical moment we did the right thing.

To increase the effectiveness of our measures we have joined the G7 countries' declaration on mutual long-term commitments towards Ukraine. As a neighbouring country and a military, humanitarian, and energy hub we want to help shape these commitments, rather than just stand on the sidelines and watch others do that.

Maintaining the European Union's comprehensive support for Ukraine's independence, including its efforts on the path towards EU membership, will be a priority of our government's European policy. Our strategic goal remains to gradually integrate Kyiv also into the wider Euro-Atlantic structures.

While supporting Ukraine's European aspirations and reform efforts, we will look after Polish interests—in particular the entities exposed to particular pressures such as small farms and transport companies.

We understand the fears that the prospects of Ukraine's EU membership may arouse in many Europeans. However, we also remember that in 2004 similar fears were raised when the decision was made about Poland's accession to the European Union. Two decades later, Western companies invest in our market and citizens of all EU states come here to look for jobs, among other things. We want Polish companies to develop in a few years' time thanks to access to Ukraine's ready market. In 2023, the value of Polish export to Ukraine was set at nearly PLN 52 billion—nearly PLN 30 billion more than in 2020. A victorious and stable Ukraine will provide us with even more investment opportunities. Our objective is to expand the area of security and prosperity to the East. For the benefit of all.

Polish companies should play an important role in the reconstruction of Ukraine's economy and infrastructure. In order to support their efforts, a Government Plenipotentiary for the Reconstruction of Ukraine was appointed. Soon the United Nations Office for Project Services will also launch its operations in our country.

Russia must account for the damage done to Ukraine so far. On 22 March, the European Council supported the proposal by the European Commission to channel the revenues from the frozen assets of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation to benefit the victims

of Putin's aggression—mainly to fund military support. The next step should be to confiscate Russian foreign exchange reserves.

The EU's effective sanctions are an important tool in the fight against the Russian aggressor. We are also soliciting additional EU sanctions against Belarus, which should be synchronized with those targeting Russia in order to limit the possibilities of circumventing them.

In 2024, the support for Ukraine will remain a priority for Polish development cooperation. We will focus on the most urgent needs related to the reconstruction of educational and medical infrastructure. At the same time, we will support the modernisation of the country, strengthening its local governments and reforms preparing Ukraine for EU membership.

The sense of sharing common goals with Ukraine will be neither full nor permanent if we fail to understand our common history. We do not forget painful events from the past and expect our Ukrainian partners to cooperate in search for truth and the graves of our forefathers.

While developing cooperation with Ukraine, we will provide support to the Polish minority and its social and cultural organisations. I will discuss this in greater detail on another occasion. Given their particular significance, I would like to revive the tradition of discussing the matters concerning the Polish community not only in Ukraine but elsewhere abroad in a separate address to the Senate.

Members of the House,

In order to improve Poland's security and ensure the possibility of its further development, it is necessary to expand the military potential of the North Atlantic Alliance. Guarantees under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty become more reliable thanks to the Alliance's new defence plans that cover also NATO's eastern flank. We will strive to adapt the Alliance to the new security environment in Europe. Our partners already keep additional forces along NATO's eastern border. We advocate robust

decisions on collective defence during the NATO summit scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C. in July.

Strengthening the transatlantic community will be one of the priorities of Poland's presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of next year. We need an effective coordination in three areas: support for Ukraine, improved security, and sanctions against Russia and Belarus.

Naturally, good relations with the US are vital for Poland's security. We want to further develop military cooperation and to maintain the presence of US troops in our territory. The US also plays an important role in modernizing our army. This summer, we expect the anti-missile base in Redzikowo to become operational. This is the same base that Donald Tusk's previous government allegedly blocked but in fact initiated.

We will develop bilateral relations with Washington also in the area of economy, energy, innovations, and new technologies.

Faced with new challenges, we must improve the effectiveness of European defence cooperation. We are examining the possibility of joining the European anti-missile shield programme, that is European Sky Shield Initiative. We will make use of the opportunities offered by the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

Poland will actively participate in further work on the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP). These special EU mechanisms are an opportunity to develop our defence industry and integrate Polish businesses with international supply chains.

We also support the establishment of a European Union rapid reaction force, with its first component fully operational by 2025. This "European legion," as I call it, of five to ten thousand soldiers should be manned with volunteers—citizens of member states—and financed on the same terms as the EU budget. We need forces capable of swiftly responding to threats emerging right next to European borders.

Another means of enhancing security, although less spectacular, is the modernisation of transport infrastructure. Effective operation of troops depends not only on their number and equipment, but also on how fast they can get to a place where they are needed. Therefore, Poland supports military mobility expenditure.

Regional cooperation, in the form of both the Bucharest Nine (B9) and the Three Seas Initiative, is crucial. The Three Seas Initiative will only be successful if it facilitates the development of transport, energy, and digital infrastructure of the region stretching from Estonia to Greece.

After Finland's and Sweden's recent accession to NATO, the Baltic Sea became safer. The Nordic and the Baltic states as well as Romania and Czechia are our closest allies and friends. We understand each other without saying a word. Of particular importance is Poland's collaboration with the northern countries to support Ukraine and enhance our region's energy security through such projects as the Baltic Pipe, as well as gas and power interconnectors with the Baltic states. We have more and more in common in other areas—we have different experiences, but common ambitions, values, and dreams.

We develop initiatives in the field of security, in the broad sense, also in cooperation with the United Kingdom, whose activity in this part of Europe we value highly.

Security policy is not limited to a military dimension. In the face of Russian neo-imperialism, the EU enlargement also includes new countries in the European security area.

Ukraine's and Moldova's entering the accession negotiations and Georgia being offered the candidate status is the success of the Eastern Partnership, a concept which materialised in 2009 at the initiative of Poland and Sweden. The Eastern Partnership prepared these countries for European integration. We will share our transformation experience with Georgia, but we expect its internal reforms to advance.

The war across our eastern border impacts the economy. It forced changes in transport routes between Europe and Asia, which also offers some opportunities. One of them is the possibility to enhance economic cooperation with the South Caucasus and Central Asian countries.

For years, Poland has tried to encourage Russia to continue modernisation and democratisation, and to assume European cultural and political identity. Indeed, being European is not merely about the geographical location. It is a civilizational choice.

Russia refused to go this way. Not because of the lack of incentives, as the West has offered them in abundance since the collapse of the USSR, but because the Russian leader decided so and sacrificed the country's interests in the name of his own ambitions.

His actions yielded the opposite effect:

- NATO has embraced two new members;
- the Kremlin did not manage to squash Ukrainians' sense of independence, but instead destroyed numerous ties and threads of affection once linking the two nations;
- finally, instead of strengthening Russia's position towards the West, he has led to "derussification" of the West, and is pushing Russia into increasing political and economic dependence on China.

President Putin likes to point out Poland's and other countries' historical mistakes. But it would be better if he learned his lesson from his own country's failures. Let us compare Russia and Canada, countries of similar geographical location. Canada has a population of 39 million, Russia of 144 million. If Russia's GDP per capita matched the Canadian GDP, its total GDP would top USD 7.5 trillion, almost four times that of Canada. Actually, in 2023, Canada's nominal GDP amounted to USD 2.1 trillion, and Russia's to USD 1.8 trillion only. I would not call this a success. Poland's national income per capita is also higher than that of Russia by a third, even though we do not have oil, gas, or gold deposits and do not invade anyone. Our income is also distributed more fairly. Hence my suggestion to our Russian neighbours: even after the fall of the tsars' empire and of the criminal USSR, you still have the largest state worldwide. You do not need the territory of other countries. Start investing in your own land and your own people at last! To begin with, you could finish this expensive war and remove despots and thieves from power. Just as we did in Poland.

Poland is always ready to cooperate with a non-imperial Russia, respecting other nations' right to self-determination and acknowledging that its neighbours also have their security interests. A Russia, which is embodied by the murdered Alexei Navalny and other prisoners of conscience: Ilya Yashin, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and Yevgeny Roizman. A Russia represented by all the Russians with a democratic and pro-European mindset, who, unfortunately, are a persecuted minority today.

We want to translate our efforts to promote civil liberties into, among other things, the reinstating of the Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Prize. Founded in 2014, the award was a token of our appreciation for people of special merit for democratic values. In the past, the prize

was awarded to leader of Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev and to Zhanna Nemtsova. But the former government had a problem with it.

Unfortunately, Russia's progressing vassalisation of Belarus means that this latter country as well must be seen primarily in terms of security threats. The over three-year-long political crisis, violations of human rights, unprecedented repressions, support for Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and provoking migration crisis—all this poses a serious threat to the entire region. We lament the situation in the country with which we share centuries of common history and strong cultural ties. Of particular concern is the situation of the Polish national minority, which became the regime's hostage. It is Belarusian authorities that are fully responsible for the worst state of bilateral relations in our history. In the past, all Polish governments were the first to encourage dialogue. Today, we have lost hope. The only way to restore it are changes on the Belarusian side.

If Alexander Lukashenko wants to regain space to make politics between Russia and the West, he must first show that he has any autonomy whatsoever. Last March marked the third anniversary of Andrzej Poczobut's arrest and last February saw a year from his outrageous sentencing to eight years in prison. We have been consistently demanding his release. We will support Belarusian civic organisations and cooperate with the country's democratic opposition.

The precondition for combating the propaganda of the Moscow and Minsk regimes is to reach Russian and Belarusian citizens and, more broadly, the audiences worldwide with reliable information. My reply to the Russian ambassador's tirade at the UN Security Council proves that Russian lies can be countered. We will do this regardless of whether the lies are spread by a Russian ambassador, former president, current leader, or legions of internet trolls, useful idiots, and paid agents.

TV stations co-financed with public funds provided by the MFA—such as TVP World services broadcast in English, German, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Russian—will also be used to combat disinformation and spread knowledge of Polish history and diplomacy.

Members of the House,

Armed conflicts undermine our sense of security even when they unfold in geographically distant regions. Therefore, we have been following the developments in the Middle East with utmost concern. Israel's war with Hamas triggers numerous moral dilemmas. The threat of the armed conflict spreading is real and would be followed by a deteriorating humanitarian crisis, a new wave of refugees, the disruption of transport routes, and terrorist activity.

We recognise Israel's right to self-defence in accordance with international humanitarian law. We condemn the Hamas-led attack of 7 October 2023 and unite in grief with the families of all the victims and the hostages still being held by terrorists. At the same time, we would like to know whether Israel considers the possibility of coexistence with the Palestinian state—recognised by Poland—and, if not, what plans it has for the five million Palestinians whose lives it controls.

Poland condemned the unacceptable Israeli attack on a defenceless humanitarian convoy of the World Central Kitchen organisation, which resulted in the death of a Pole, Damian Soból. Let me express my deep sorrow on his tragic death. Self-defence in a just cause does not exempt anyone from responsibility for their own actions and for violating the laws of war. Poland has taken note of the apology made by the Israeli government, but we demand that such incidents never happen again, either to foreign volunteers or to Palestinian civilians.

The war in Ukraine and the crisis in the Middle East affect the whole world. Even though the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America experience the negative impact of Russia's assault on Ukraine, especially food shortages, they do not always share our view of the reasons behind this conflict. It is often a result of their historical experience of being colonised and dominated by the Western countries. Not all our partners notice that Russia's aggression is in fact a manifestation of a colonial mentality, which is rightly a thing of the past. The task of Polish diplomacy is to prevent harmful forms of cooperation with the aggressor, such as circumventing international sanctions or supplying Russia with military equipment.

China is a superpower and Poland's important economic partner, but in the face of Russia's war against Ukraine, national security has become our top priority.

We would like to point out to our Chinese partners that, due to its historical experiences, Poland, like many countries in our region, rejects all attempts to return to neo-imperial practices. In the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, both Poland and China were victims of colonialism and imposed treaties. Therefore, we hope that the Chinese side will better understand our opposition to the Vladimir Putin's version of modern colonialism. China's measures to halt Russian aggressive policy would be appreciated by the Central and Eastern European states, just like during the Polish October of 1956.

Competition between China and the United States is natural, but should be peaceful. We do not want to choose between having good relations with a major trade partner on the one hand, and the most important security provider on the other. We believe that in its interaction with Beijing, the European Union should follow a simple rule: cooperate where possible, compete where needed, confront where necessary.

We hope that there will be as many areas of cooperation as possible—including saving climate and natural environment. And we expect the Chinese side to display similar openness. We appreciate Beijing's support for Polish aspirations to join the G20.

Thinking about our relations with non-European countries, we dream that our values, such as the rule of law, democracy, and human rights, will become universal. We think that, in the long run, they maximise the well-being of both societies and citizens. At the same time, we note a propaganda offensive aimed at describing the current international order as dominated by the countries of the wealthy Global North and as a tool of alleged discrimination, or even repression, against the neighbours from the developing Global South. Russia and its supporting regimes lead the way in that.

However, for centuries Russia itself has been a "prison of nations," a country which colonised and destroyed its neighbours' cultures, including Poland's. Today's conflict is not between the Global North and the Global South. Nor is it a clash of the East and the West, since the coalition supporting Ukraine is made up of countries from the USA to European countries, South Korea, Japan, Australia, to New Zealand. Nor is it a conflict of competing ideologies, for the only common idea that the authoritarian side has to offer is the right of the stronger.

Poland has a special mandate to counter international populism and authoritarianism. The transformation of our country over the past decades is the best proof that Western values are up to date. Poland may be a source of inspiration for all those who defend democracy and want to oppose the authoritarian demagogy.

We must fight it in word and deed. In word, countering different propaganda outlets, both in traditional media and on social networks. So that Russia Today could be replaced with Russia Tomorrow.

We will put an end to the impunity of Russian disinformation agents. This is exemplified by dismantling the network Voice of Europe, as innocent as its name may seem, together with our foreign partners. We will not let the Kremlin manipulate our national or EU debates. We may differ in many matters but will not let our adversaries play us.

That is why, at the MFA, we are reinforcing teams responsible for strategic communications and fight against foreign disinformation. We initiated international coordination to counteract disinformation campaigns related to the upcoming elections to the European Parliament. We are reactivating Regional Centres for International Debate.

Countering autocracy is not limited to the media environment. We must eliminate tax havens, track down assets plundered by autocrats, monitor investments, and control the transfers of sensitive technologies. We also feel co-responsible for developing a fairer architecture of international relations through, among other things, reforming the UN. The countries of the Global South are right to think that serious international institutions have become unrepresentative and dysfunctional over the decades. It is impossible to reasonably explain why the permanent members of the UN Security Council do not include countries from Latin America or the most populated country to date—India. Poland will support serious reform proposals, including the proposal of a permanent seat for the European Union on the UN Security Council.

The European Union is the driving force of our strength, our future, and our home. The representatives of today's opposition claim that it is no longer the organisation it used to be when we joined it 20 years ago. It is true. After all, since our accession, we signed the Lisbon Treaty negotiated by Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński and ratified by President

Lech Kaczyński. Given the dynamic developments across the world, Europe's strong position cannot be taken for granted once and for all. The EU must become a geopolitical player equal to other international powers.

Poland and Poles deserve to play a role of one of the leaders of further European integration. It is not about mythically patting each other's backs or complimenting each other out of courtesy. A leader is, by definition, someone able to reach their goals in a way which wins people over. Poland has such potential. An enlarging EU must be a more balanced one. Within it, no one may have a monopoly on truth.

Next year, on 1 January, Poland will take over the six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union. As I have already mentioned, it will focus on security in the broad sense and start several months after the elections to the European Parliament. The Council of the EU will cooperate with a new European Parliament, a new European Commission, and a new President of the European Council.

The shape of a new European Commission must be better adapted to the new political situation. Its priorities must include new challenges: from defence policy to the EU enlargement, treated with due gravity, and migration policy. During our presidency, we also want to show the inextricable link between the European project and such fundamental values as democracy and the rule of law. Poland offers a unique experience—a victory over populism and the temptations of non-liberal democracy.

The EU as an institution remains a powerful magnet for countries, which is best proved by new candidates being continuously interested in becoming member states. Ukraine literally fights for its right to be one of them.

A bi-directional enlargement—to the East and in the Western Balkans—is a mutually reinforcing process. We appreciate the significance of the European Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. We support the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, put forward by the European Commission. Therefore, we believe that synchronising foreign policy with EU values is a *sine qua non* of accession for candidates. EU membership is not an obligation, but a free choice made by a country and its citizens. However, when you decide to join, you must accept these common rules.

The EU should react adequately to emerging crises. That is why Poland will support a realistic reform of the EU which will contribute to increasing its competitiveness and

power. We are not convinced that this requires reforming the Treaties, but we cannot exclude that some member states will make it a prerequisite for completing the enlargement process. As a country, we will then face a dilemma: to accept the Treaties reform, which might involve some compromises, or to prevent our Eastern and Southern neighbours from acceding to the EU, while such accession would be of benefit to us. The most controversial part of an envisaged reform will concern, of course, the possibility of giving up the rule of unanimity in some areas and the proposed modification of the voting system. However, I would like to remind you that Poland joined the EU with the Nice Treaty system, negotiated by the government of Jerzy Buzek, under which Poland had only one vote less than Germany or France. It was only the Lisbon Treaty—and I already mentioned who had negotiated it—that established the current voting system which enabled the largest countries to create a blocking majority.

Our task is therefore to establish a fairer voting system which will ensure that all countries have the same influence on the EU agenda—both before and after enlargement. Both the government and the political party I represent are open to arguments in this regard. Personally, I believe that the scandalous behaviour of one of our regional partners—we all know who I am referring to—while adopting, or rather delaying, sanctions imposed on Russia justifies the introduction of majority vote on sanctions. On the other hand, I think that accepting new members of the EU should always require unanimity. It remains an open question what kind of majority voting system would be the fairest and what areas, among those already mentioned, it could possibly involve. During the Conference on the Future of Europe, where I represented the European People's Party, it was suggested, for example, that the establishment of a military mission should require unanimity, but a majority should be enough to prolong it. This seems to be a reasonable compromise. On the other hand, the European Parliament proposed that the majority should mean $\frac{4}{5}$ of member states, that is more than our constitutional majority. Moreover, national parliaments have various weighted voting systems and measures to protect the interests of minorities. Let us bring forward wise Polish proposals.

At this point, I would like to make an offer. I will not call those who agreed to depart from the Nice Treaty system, which was more beneficial to Poland, traitors. But by the same token, no one should dare to deny patriotism to proponents of the view that if the Union is to consist of more than 30 members and become a superpower, it must make decisions

more efficiently. I am calling on all of you to engage in discussion on these challenges, based on rules different from those followed in previous years. Let me declare openness, both on my part and on the part of the ministry I am heading, to any constructive idea to move Polish causes forward and to strengthen Poland's position. Not against the mythical Brussels, but for Poland and in its favour. There is and will be room for dispute, but no one has the right to deprive others of their Polish identity because of inevitable differences of opinion.

Members of the House,

Bilateral relations with European countries will be one of the most important elements of our diplomatic efforts. It is obvious. As I already mentioned, we are fixing our relations with Germany. We abandoned the confrontational tone and returned to a substantive dialogue. We are reactivating a number of bilateral formats and looking for new areas of cooperation, also in terms of security. That is the reason why I keep regular contact with my German counterpart, including as part of the Weimar Triangle.

Partnership means mutual respect for interests, as well as sensitivity to and empathy for humanitarian and historical matters—including compensation to Polish citizens, victims of German aggression and occupation during World War II, and to the Polish state for the losses incurred as a result of this aggression. Resolving issues painful for Poles is in our mutual interest. We expect Berlin to put forward proposals of compensation, which may take many forms: supporting the survivors, reconstructing Polish monuments, investing in Polish security, teaching Polish in Germany, or promoting Poland's history. A new building of the Polish Embassy, which will be opened this year, will boost Poland's commitment to dialogue with Germany and increase Polish presence in German public debate. Situated at the heart of Berlin, the embassy will be an important centre—not only diplomatic, but also cultural. However, German investments in the security of the entire region should be particularly important. This would be a way to demonstrate the country's understanding of past mistakes and willingness to face future challenges.

The beginning of 2024 brought a new opening in Polish–French relations. I am pleased that France declares willingness to intensify its strategic partnership with Poland. We

hope for restoring the habit of intergovernmental consultations which should be aimed at cooperation, especially as it comes to the military and building European defence capacities.

Germany and France are our most important partners in the European Union and intensifying the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle will be among the priorities of Poland's foreign policy. Together with Ministers Baerbock and Séjourné, we are convinced that the potential demonstrated by this format must be leveraged to a much greater extent than ever.

Poland will develop ties with countries with whom we jointly acceded to NATO and the European Union—both bilaterally and multilaterally. I have already mentioned the Three Seas Initiative and the B9. Another valuable format of cooperation is the Visegrad Group, which, however, changes its character due to different views on the gravity of the Eastern threat. Using an instrument inconsistently with its purpose could cause its damage. Therefore, the V4 should be a tool for cooperation only in those areas in which the member states have common interests—such as densifying the energy and transport infrastructure or increased involvement of EU institutions in the protection of external borders of the Schengen Area.

Poland's strength and security depend not only on how many divisions we have, but also on how many of them our allies and our enemies have. They also depend on the role that our country plays in the international community. On whether Poland will be perceived as a responsible member of this community. As a country able to see beyond its own narrow interests and to face global challenges shoulder to shoulder with others. The amount of Polish development and humanitarian aid has rocketed since Russia's invasion. Over the past two years, we have become the main donor of humanitarian aid for Ukraine. The ministries of the Polish government spent EUR 16 billion in total on comprehensive assistance for Ukraine and Ukrainian war refugees.

Development cooperation funds at the MFA's disposal are obviously much lower, totalling almost PLN 450 million in 2023. This year, we will allocate almost PLN 600 million for this purpose. Poland's participation in financing the European Union's Official

Development Assistance through its EU budget contribution amounts to almost EUR 800 million. The contribution to the European Development Fund is made by the MFA and totals EUR 30 million. We are sensitive to expectations expressed in other regions of the world. However, empathy is not our sole motivation. Unequal access to basic goods, underdevelopment, and demographic problems create global challenges whose results we must face also in Europe.

In Poland, there are many humanitarian and assistance non-governmental organisations. Young people are especially aware of other countries' and communities' needs, they are the ones who notice alarming phenomena and who speak up. I want to assure you that Polish diplomacy under my leadership will be open to your proposals. We will channel the *Polish Aid* to a great extent into helping women and girls. Reinforcing their status contributes directly to economic growth and fighting poverty. Moreover, climate change adaptation must be visible in the way Poland helps other countries—especially those putting climate on top of their political agendas. That is why I will maintain the cross-cutting priorities of the Polish Aid for 2021–2030 determined by the previous government.

The EU's Global Gateway strategy is aiming to transform traditional development assistance into one which involves stronger ties between our own interests, including in economic terms, with the interests of our partners. This is the right direction. However, for Poland to make full use of the EU tools, we must find the funds to carry out pilot projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Numerous, even geographically remote crises have an impact on Poland's situation also through migration.

People have always migrated. So have we, the Poles. I was a refugee myself. When legal and controlled, migration may be of benefit to migrants and host countries alike. Still, the right to migration is not human right and it must be subject to restrictions. And the countries are entitled to regulate who can stay on their territory.

I believe that irregular migration on a mass scale is a challenge not only capable of overthrowing governments but also dangerous to liberal democracy as such. The current asylum system has been overburdened with excessive numbers of migrants. Unless moderate political powers provide citizens with a sense of control over the situation, we are likely to be hit by another wave—and a tidal one this time—of populism battering on voters' fears. The difference between populists and responsible political powers is that the former want to play the migration card but without solving the problem. Here is what we need to do in order to tackle this challenge effectively.

First, we should combat the causes by improving economic and political situation of the countries in which major migration flows originate.

Second, we must fight the criminal groups that profit from smuggling people on land and at sea as well as their accessories.

Third, we have to create a clear path of legal migration for those needed by our economies and societies and come up with effective return mechanisms for those who have not been granted the right of residence in the EU.

For these objectives to be fulfilled, we must not only cooperate supranationally but also develop a transparent migration strategy. Our predecessors ignored that obligation. In this government, the responsibility for its discharge lies with the Interministerial Migration Team. As a result, the visa system will be reformed.

In essence, the cash-for-visa scandal as it has been referred to in the media was not just about a regular criminal corruption scheme. It should also call for public outrage that the Polish visa became the easiest and cheapest way to get to Western Europe. We are changing it. We have provided the missions with temporary guidelines. A White Paper has been drawn up at the MFA on the necessary measures to eliminate irregularities in the Polish visa system. I have raised the fee for Polish visas to the level of a European average. During the first quarter of 2024, our consuls issued 109 thousand visas, marking a thirty percent drop compared to the same period last year. At the Council of Ministers, we are about to initiate legislative changes to eliminate the pathologies in accessing the labour market and studies in Poland which were tolerated by the preceding government.

Poland finds itself in a special situation. Our border is under constant threat from Russia and Belarus as the two countries artificially provoke migration pressure to destabilise us.

Border control should be humanitarian and transparent but firm. It was out of the fear of uncontrolled migration that millions of UK citizens chose to vote for Brexit, acceding to a desperate remedy that has proven to be not only ineffective but even worse than the disease. If we want to steer clear of such mistakes, we must show our citizens that we know how to manage the migration process.

Countries increasingly build their international standing on economic potential and ability to compete on the global market. It is largely up to Polish investors with their initiative how much of the emerging opportunities will be ours to seize. Economic diplomacy also has a part to play by supporting Polish products and technologies abroad. The process has been underway for 30 years now. Polish exports noted a 25-fold increase in the three decades from 1992. The structure of exported commodities evolved as well, with a decrease in raw materials and a growth in processed products. That being so, I have two questions to those of you who are Europhobes. First, do you believe that it would therefore be good for Poland if Germany went into recession? And second, do you think that this enormous success would have been possible if Poland had exited the EU and a customs frontier had materialized along the River Odra as it did on the English Channel?

It is important for Poland and the EU as a whole to reduce the risk related to the supply chains from Asia. We support steps taken by the European Commission to safeguard the supplies of critical raw materials.

One of the energy priorities will be to strengthen the ties with our allies in the US and the EU as well as other partners who have proven themselves reliable during the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Most countries in Europe have managed to reduce their dependence on Russian oil and natural gas. Energy security in Poland and in Europe is now higher than before the war, while Russia's energy blackmail options have shrunk drastically.

Now primarily based on LNG purchases, the energy partnership between Poland and the US is expanded into nuclear energy cooperation. We are waiting for a proposal of a contract to build Poland's first nuclear power plant, stipulating a specific budget and date of delivery.

Energy matters are also significant in the relations between Poland and Ukraine. Today, it is all-important that we support Ukraine by supplying it with fuel and helping maintain continued operational capacity of the country's regularly targeted power system. But tomorrow, Poland will engage actively in its reconstruction.

Members of the House,

It takes an efficient, professional, and apolitical foreign service to carry out the tasks outlined above, one that does not benefit the party but the state.

Once the continuity of the Polish foreign policy was radically called into question, the condition of the foreign service did not remain unaffected. Much more often than ever during the past twenty-five years, officials and diplomats were nominees of one political party. I feel sorry for all the members of the foreign service who were exposed to hostility and injustice at the Ministry when it was run by politicians from the preceding government.

In one of the early legislative moves after the 2015 elections, the Civil Service Act was amended to open up career opportunities to candidates without qualifications and professional experience. More harmful changes came with the implementation of the Foreign Service Act, a legal instrument incompatible with our needs.

Mismanagement of human resources brought about an outflow of experts and rendered it impossible to attract equally competent employees from elsewhere in the public administration, let alone the private sector.

Negligence and omission in the development and modernisation of IT infrastructure only exacerbated the situation. Nothing has been done over the past eight years to integrate the Ministry's premises in Warsaw, currently scattered among as many as 17 different locations and still short of office space and facilities suitable for diplomatic purposes. Not a single major building of a Polish mission abroad has been put into use over the eight-year span, although it must be said that decisions were at least made to launch investments in Berlin and Minsk after years of unnecessary dithering.

It was my priority from day one in office to completely change that situation. The Ministry's budget for the current year was successfully modified so as to make headway after years of inactivity with a number of investments, refurbishments and purchases, including upgrades to critical information and communication systems. The political nominees were dismissed from their managerial posts in my early days as foreign minister. Every sphere of the Ministry's work has come in for an overhaul with the view of making up for the lost time.

The plan to replace senior officials at Poland's missions abroad has stirred up much emotion recently. In the diplomatic service, job rotation is a natural process. The reshuffle I have proposed involves several dozen ambassadors and permanent representatives. Most of them have already held their current offices abroad for a few years now and would qualify for rotation anyway. Some will continue as employees at the MFA, but some others, incompetent, bad at foreign languages, poorly skilled to manage foreign missions and incapable of duly representing their homeland, should never set foot in the Ministry again.

There are far-reaching consequences to how Poland's foreign policy and Foreign Service gradually became subdued to political or actually partisan gains. In all likelihood, the political sphere, especially Poland's international reputation, will be straightened up much faster than the Foreign Service. The restoration of the latter will require years of reform.

It will be all-important to pass a modern law reinstating the indispensable standards of the Foreign Service. The work on its bill has been ongoing since I assumed office. We will present the results by this year's end.

Still, the law in force must be amended urgently as the first step. The process will let us eliminate considerable budget risks, revise glaring mistakes, fix the recruitment system, and restore the essential criteria. The amendments to the Foreign Service Act have already been drafted at the MFA and will be submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration shortly. I hope for your understanding and support.

Mr Speaker,

Members of the House,

We all feel that history has sped up. All the signs are that something out of the ordinary is about to happen. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that we are living in a pre-war epoch. A monster has risen from the ruins of an empire. Polish families have returned to discussing whether we are in danger of a war. A mindset has resurfaced the tragic nature of which is reflected in the opening lines of our national anthem, "Poland will not perish as long as we live."

That tragic nature is also experienced by Ukraine. It is not by accident that the country's national anthem begins on a similar note, "The glory of Ukraine has not yet perished, nor the freedom!" There is more at stake in the defensive war waged by our neighbour than its independence and borders. That war is also about the feeling of security in Poland and the region and about the condition of freedom worldwide. If Ukraine defends itself, democrats will believe that good overcomes evil, while the Western values can be victorious. If it falls, the land across from our eastern border will become shrouded in the darkness of a triumphant dictatorship. Russia's aggression has shaken up the old global order. At the end of the day, the alternative ahead is simple: we may have to deal either with a defeated Russian army stationed east of Ukraine's eastern border, or with a victorious one at Poland's eastern border. I trust that Putin will lose that war thanks to the efforts of the civilised world.

When I first addressed the House as foreign minister back in 2008, I said that "Poland will be a normal European country when it will have normal European neighbours on both sides of its borders." The result of the ongoing war will be decisive in our getting closer to that goal.

Over the past thirty-five years, Poland has taken advantage of a historical window of opportunity and has become part of a massive security zone as its eastern flank. Now, owing to the sacrifice made by the Ukrainian people, we can move the edge of the free world hundreds of kilometres to the east. We in Poland know what it means to fight alone. It is good to see that Ukraine's struggle for freedom has gathered support of both the

world's largest economy, the European Union, and the mightiest global military power, the United States of America. The aid package passed by US Congress means that the Rzeszów airfield will soon resound again with the roar of military transport aircraft carrying equipment and ammunition.

Once it reaches the end of this bumpy stretch in its history, Poland must be a secure country and strong partner in the European Union, and an active and responsible member of the global community.

Future generations will never forgive us if we do not do everything in our power to seize that opportunity. Still, if everyone does their part: the Ukrainian heroes near Kharkiv, in Donbas and on the Dnipro, their courageous president in Kyiv, and if they get enough from our Western democracies in the European Union, Washington, and London, then, with God's help, freedom will prevail.

Thank you for your attention!