

Daniel Mitov

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Bulgaria

Dear President,

Dear Governor,

Reverend,

Dear Sebastian,

Lazar,

I am really honoured to be here and firstly I have to say that you are winning the competition when it comes to youth participation in the Foreign Affairs Council. Sebastian is quite younger than I am and, very often, even I am taken for someone who is younger than he really is.

Secondly, you are probably wondering why I am not addressing you in the beginning in German, the truth is that I can't, but I feel really happy in this distinguished company of gentlemen who speak brilliant German and I will try to compensate with my English in this case.

Once again,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me once again start by thanking for the invitation to speak at this respected forum. It is really timely and clear that an honest debate on Europe is particularly important at the present time as our continent is under pressure for a variety of reasons.

Economic growth is uncertain and the side effects of globalization require better responses as economic displacement is impacting more and more of our fellow citizens. Terrorism is still very much on our agenda and we must

continue to offer solutions. Political debates in many of our societies are becoming very acrimonious and we as politicians must step up our efforts to define and implement policies that make a real difference to people's lives. While the EU might be able to weather crises reasonably well, we ought to move beyond crisis management and start strengthening its capacity to preempt those crises!

The migrant and refugee upsurge is the latest in a series of such crises.

While the situation has been stabilized with the EU–Turkey agreement somehow, we must intensify our work on building an integrated set of policies and institutions which will provide sufficient, long-term solutions. Call it 'Plan B' if you will but now is the time to commit to such an agenda.

At its core, such an endeavour must place the idea of more Europe! Johannes addressed these issues very well before me, so I won't enter into detail in these regards.

We have been discussing some elements: European external border police force, greater community engagement in return policy, in readmission policy, in fighting against human trafficking, a reform of the refugee system, etc. But I believe we must look further into the future and examine new options. For instance, discuss the possible deepening of the prerogatives of various institutions that can make a difference: Europol, Euro Just, the European Prosecutor's Office, etc.

We need to look at the crisis situations as opportunities. It is to realize that crises give us an opportunity to see where we have gone wrong or what we still, until this moment, have not improved enough, and to deepen our understanding of how to build more synergy and more integration. A crisis gives us an opportunity to integrate more.

But there is a wider context of these debates, one that goes beyond policy. In a world of unprecedented migration and sustained refugee movements, we

must address some fundamental questions in a very frank and open manner. The governor says we must call a spade a spade. I fully agree to address the things with their real names and recognize their real nature.

Our policies must not undermine the essential bedrock of the European values and culture! Whatever we do we need to always keep an eye on what we stand on – our values and our fundamental identity.

Multiculturalism, that's a word that we use very often in the last years, must not be allowed to transform into an alibi for non-engagement and non-integration. I know this is a hot potato here, because we are going to call certain things with their real names, but I somehow want to provoke everyone and put something on the table which has already been put several times by different leaders yet somehow we don't seem to continue this conversation.

Diversity is valuable when it does not ossify into self-enclosed and self-isolated communities. I am afraid multiculturalism has created exactly that because it was charged with ideology, it was basically put on the table as a concept which accepts differences in a relativist manner without any type of critical approach, giving benefits without asking for responsibility. Responsibility is that precise element that is missing from the multicultural concept and I will probably scandalise someone but I also don't like the notion of tolerance. Tolerance is a passive virtue. You tolerate something or someone who you think of as lower than you, or something that is not at your level. I like the term 'respect'. Respect already puts everyone on the same level, and when it is given, at the same time it is required from the other side.

I think we need a new terminology in Europe for our projects. I think multiculturalism is already gone, multiculturalism is dead. Let's put it this way. I was trying to find a better or more diplomatic way to express it but that's it. I would like to use the term ethnic and cultural pluralism.

What that means is that the different components, the different cultural and

ethnic components of Europe participate together in the building of European nations which are based on the same fundamental values and which keep track of them. We need to state clearly, for instance, that whoever comes to Europe and thinks that women are not equal to men is not welcome. That needs to be said clearly and we need to be sure that we draw lines because we are challenged in ways in which we cannot allow ourselves not to recognize. If we don't recognize this situation only the nationalists, the populists and the xenophobes will gain popularity.

We need to Europeanise this discourse and make it again rational while also recognizing the realities. I realise that sometimes being frank is not the most comfortable position to be in, but in order to move forward we must bear in mind the larger issue at hand. I hope that with these notions I have somehow provoked you and later on in the panels this probably can be part of the discussion.

Spelling out the growing set of worrying trends and developments is a very useful exercise for our political and policy discussions. At the same time, we must be very clear and recognize that this shift of circumstances is a product of the behaviour of various actors as well.

For instance, Russia has chosen to resort to a 19th-century type of approach to international relations and has violated the rules-based international order of the post-Cold War period. Let me say quite unequivocally that a return to the concept of the 'balance of power' is not acceptable to us. Some kind of 'Yalta', a new 'Yalta Mindset', is not something that we recognize as an acceptable way forward and all European responses need to adequately counter such temptations.

We speak about Russia and we also speak very often about migration. One of the biggest challenges we have in front of us right now is coming exactly from the North-East, challenging the international security and rules-based architecture which we have. I haven't heard much about this subject until this moment. That's why I wanted to raise it. When it comes to the

conversation we have with Russia very often we deal with certain consequential problems. We talk about the Minsk Agreements, we talk about Donbass, we talk about Ukraine, we talk about South Ossetia and Abkhazia and we talk about Transnistria etc.

But the big question and the big conversation we need to have with the Russians is probably about what they are trying to tell us. And our Russian colleagues are telling us the following: Russia has always been part of Europe but it has never merged with the West, Russia has a specific cultural code, a specific cultural matrix, which Russians want to defend. And they say "We will never allow ourselves to be civilizationally colonized by Western Europe".

Well, I am curious, and I want to know in conversation with our Russian colleagues, what is their cultural matrix. What is the nature of their specific unique cultural code? Let's make a dissection of that within an honest conversation and see the line between us. When we speak about the European Union our values are very transparent. They are written, they are talked about, and we know who we are.

But we don't know what stands on the other side and we need to be sure that we have this conversation in order to avoid future confrontation and escalation. We need to draw lines, we need to be very clear that we will not allow ourselves to step outside of the value-based system which we have, and that we are going to defend it.

We are not going to allow such aggressive violation of the international rules-based order.

Further, actors such as the so-called 'Islamic state' have managed to unleash instability of quite dramatic proportions. In any case, the EU's actions to the increasing challenges must always take into account that these trends have specific actors which bring them forth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The migrant and refugee crisis has illustrated the need for a better institutional infrastructure not just in the EU but also beyond it. While the sheer speed of the evolving crisis led to a somewhat haphazard process of bilateral and multilateral talks and consultations, the events of the last few years have confirmed the need for inclusive and stable formats of cooperation within SEE region and between SEE and the EU.

For instance, it is clear that trying to resolve complex issues without the institutional participation of the EU member states from the region forecloses numerous opportunities for sustainable progress. Within the region, Bulgaria has made every effort to reinvigorate the work of the South East European Cooperation Process, established in Sofia some 20 years ago.

It is my firm conviction that only a linked-up, inclusive set of structures and formats can provide the necessary institutional underpinning of long-term solutions to the current and future crises.

One of the key longer-term elements of our plans to address the current challenges is engagement in the broader neighbourhood. There is a great deal of agreement on this at the political level but reluctance is also present.

Elites and citizens increasingly have misgivings about deep engagement in the areas where danger and uncertainty abound. This is understandable. But if we wish to really stabilize these regions, we must commit the resources and the people to help. Moreover, we need a comprehensive, multi-faceted framework of engagement that promotes economic growth, development, institutional change, good governance, social transformation, etc.

It is our responsibility to explain this to our citizens, to structure the right policies and to provide the necessary political commitment. Europe cannot afford to be continuously subjected to instability from its peripheries!

Let's explain this in the following way. There are two reasons why we are facing this migration pressure. One of them is, of course, the failed states and the turmoils, the military turmoils, like in Syria, in Yemen and in Libya. That's one of them. But, there is another phenomenon - those states are incapable of creating the institutional framework which assures the environment which would give the possibility to their citizens to develop in their own countries.

That is a huge problem which we also need to address. Very often when we speak about systems and development, what we mean is hardware development - building roads, hospitals, schools and whatever else, which is fine, which is good, which is very plausible, but what we very often forget, not only forget, we actually run away from it, is to actually push forward the institutional development which is the direction towards the introduction of good governance practices, which will create an institutional architecture that will allow the citizens of those countries we are talking about to stay and to develop in their own environments.

People are running away not only from guns, they are also running away from corruption, they are running away from incapable institutions which are not giving them the opportunity to develop themselves.

So, what we need to do is to fund institutions, non-governmental organisations and other mechanisms in order to create the possibility for influencing exactly that aspect of the crisis and work towards introducing good governance practices.

Very often we are accused that we are trying to colonize someone civilizationally. What are the colonisational aspects of transparency in government? It is nothing, it is just a good governance practice. What are the colonisational aspects of the rule of law? That is just a good governance practice, which has proven itself as good. That's why people are attracted to those countries where these principles are sound, and we need to move forward the hardware development with the software development - the

institutional one. We cannot neglect these principals, and very often we do, and until this moment we have done it many times.

Over the last few years, we have had numerous occasions to discuss these matters and we will continue to do so. Clearly, there are some important differences about concepts, approach or timing. And again, this will persist for some time. But the politicians need to recognize that security is fast becoming a European public good that citizens expect from us and from the European Union.

Indeed, it is responding too slowly to this change that is contributing to the current wave of political discontent across Europe. In this sense, we need to accelerate our discussions in order to create long-term solutions. This entails integrating the plethora of freedom, security and justice policies and ensuring that these policies are well-funded and institutions legally well-equipped.

The last words I want to add are about the metaphor with the airplane, it was a great metaphor, I think. I will try somehow to adopt this by saying that the weather and the people in the tower and everything else are very important, of course, but it is also very important who the pilot is, who the pilots are. Europe needs leadership. It has great leaders. They just need to start doing the necessary, the right things, not only the popular things. The popular thing is not always the right thing.

Yesterday, when we were discussing with Sebastian about migration, I remembered a moment, a debate between John Major, as Prime Minister and Tony Blair, as leader of the opposition. At a certain point Tony Blair says: „Do you know, what the difference between me and the Prime Minister is? I lead my party, he follows his“. Very often we have a situation of following not leading.

Now Europe needs leadership more than ever, probably, and all of us are somehow called upon in order to provide it.

Once again, many thanks for this opportunity to present some of my thoughts in a more informal setting. It is a timely discussion and I hope it will spur all of us into an even more intense and focused effort to really come to terms with what remains a very complex situation.

Thank you very much for your attention!