



HR/VP SPEECHES

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the 2017 Bled Strategic Forum

Check against delivery!

First of all, thank you for the invitation, thank you for the flexibility about the format. This is also an excellent opportunity for me, as well as for many of you, I believe, to have plenty of bilateral meetings, so I will get most out of this opportunity.

It is really a pleasure for me to be here in Slovenia for my first official visit to the country, and especially here in Bled, with so many friends and partners from our region - let me say so as an Italian -, but also from all around the world.

I believe all of us here, all who deal with our regional and international affairs, share the feeling that somehow indeed we have entered a "new reality". The same title - 'the new reality' - would have felt much less appropriate just one year ago.

Of course, much of the changes we are witnessing and living are not entirely new. If you seriously think about that, we have lived globalisation for at least the last 20 years now. The rise of new global powers and new actors has certainly not begun this year. Actually, sometimes we refer to emerging powers when they have emerged largely already and even new security threats, as terrorism or cyber-warfare, have actually affected our security environment for quite a few years already.

What has truly changed in recent times are the reactions of governments and citizens who are faced with this reality: the overall global, political and security environment – somehow the fragility of governance, the unpredictability of institutional choices.

In this context, I believe the European Union stands as a strong, united, reliable and global partner, a solid player and a partner for those who look for a rational, constructive, multilateral and cooperative way out of the too many crisis of today's world.

So, the choice ahead of us is very clear. On the one hand, there is a confrontational approach to the issues of our times. A mind-set based on transactions, on zero-sum games, where my success requires somebody else to fail. On the other, the hard work that leads to win-win solution, compromises and multilateral approaches.

It is clear where the European Union stands, not because we are naïve, or because we don't like power politics. We understand it. It is not a matter of being in the field of idealism versus realpolitik. No, it is because we know what works better. It is not because we are nice – even if I do not find anything bad about being nice -, but it is about our self-interest, our own self-interest.

We know that cooperative solutions are more solid and more resilient in times of crisis. So Europeans know well that cooperative solutions work better than confrontational ones. It is out of our history, it is out of our experience, sometimes it is out of our geography and it is also out of our culture that we know how it is.

So let me take as an example the most extreme case and probably the one that is in the news today everywhere in the world, including here: the situation with North Korea, a major provocation and the threat that acted against the entire international community

- no one excluded.

We, the European Union, share the same goal of all other world powers and of the entire international community - no one excluded. We want a Korean peninsula that is free from nuclear weapons because this is in the interest, first of all, of all Koreans, both in the north and in the south, but also of the region and of the entire world.

We want a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation and this is the end game we are working for. The path undertaken by North Korea is dangerous, irresponsible and illegal. They are playing with fire and the flames could rapidly spread to the entire region and the all world.

But the question is: how can we help de-escalate tensions and achieve our goal of denuclearisation? There is no easy answer to this question. But I believe we, the European Union, and, indeed, the regional powers and the entire international community should act with determination, diplomacy and in unity.

Over the weekend, I talked to the foreign ministers of the Republic of Korea [Kang Kyung-wha] and Japan [Taro Kono], telling them that the European Union is ready to support new and tougher sanctions by the UN Security Council and to implement them immediately and fully as we always do. If you care about peace, this is the moment to put maximum pressure on North Korea - economic and diplomatic pressure - in full coordination with all the other relevant players.

But you can, must be strong and peaceful. Being peaceful doesn't mean to be weak, but being strong doesn't mean to go the military way because there is no military solution to these tensions. Any attack could easily spiral into a large-scale conflict. It would be useless and harmful. The consequences would be unpredictable, certainly dramatic for the people of the Korean Peninsula, for the region and most likely for the world.

A denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula can only be achieved through tough pressure, as I said, economic, diplomatic, in unity - the tougher we can - and peaceful means. And this is the European Union's position, agreed by all 28 Member States over the summer.

This crisis is not only local or regional. It could affect all of us and it requires everyone's engagement. So after my phone calls these days, together with good friends who are leading in a remarkable manner the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation, Lassina Zerbo, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, Yukiya Amano, today we will discuss on how we can strengthen the multilateral non-proliferation regime worldwide because we will always choose the co-operative, multilateral way.

We Europeans will continue to play our part, working with the Republic of Korea, with Japan, with China, the Russian Federation, the United States, with the United Nations and regional organisations to make rationality, security and peace prevail. And we will have our meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the 28 European Union Member States later this week in Tallinn and this will be, this common work on DPRK, will be on top of our agenda.

All our partners know where we stand and they know they can count on us. And they know that we will always seek cooperation and try to build new, strong, reliable partnerships because in a small and chaotic world like ours you need friends and partners and you need to invest in their strength, because my partner's security is my own security in this world and my partner's strength is my own strength.

Let me add a couple of words on the region, on this region, on our region: the Balkans. This is true - this effort to build cooperative ways for our relations with the other side of the globe. And this is even more true when it comes to our neighbourhood, starting from our brothers and sisters in the Balkans. And I say brothers and sisters, because we are all part of the same family: the European one.

I get really angry - and some of you in the room might know this already - when I hear about the European path of the Balkans or the Western Balkans, because it is Europe already - you did not have to move anywhere. It's already the heart of Europe.

What we are working on is the European Union perspective of the Western Balkans. Each and every of our partner in the region has a perspective towards the European Union. The people of the Balkans are European. They want and they deserve the same

opportunities, the same safeguards and rights as all other citizens of our continent. So, for me, it is only obvious that all the Balkans should be and eventually will be part of our European Union.

This is the promise we made to each other more than 13 years ago in Thessaloniki: an unequivocal commitment that was repeated this year by the European Council in March, by all 28 Member States. And I have made it my even personal goal that by the end of the current European Commission mandate, in two years, we will see practical, measurable progress for all our six partners in the Western Balkans - progress that will make it irreversible their path towards the European Union.

I say this after a turbulent year - I know this well - with moments of deep political crisis in different parts of the region. Again, working for positive solutions does not mean you do not see the negative, you do not see the difficulties, it does not mean being naïve, but it simply means that, yes, investing in the positive forces, in the positive dynamics that are there can be the smartest investment you can do. And the positive dynamics and forces are there, starting from the energy, the determination - I am not sure it is an English expression, but I would say -the hunger for the future of the people of the Balkans.

And, at the end of the day, even in such a difficult year for the region all our partners have overcome the difficulties and continue to advance towards the European Union future. They have done so first and foremost because this is what their citizens are asking from them, particularly the young people and the businesses. And they have done so in partnership with us, knowing that they can count always on us, on our friendship and on being a family.

With the European Union, I have always been there trying to help - sometimes we have succeeded, sometimes we have had more difficulties, but also and always in a spirit of friendship and being on the same side.

Just a few days ago, I was hosting again the two Presidents [*Aleksandar Vučić and Hashim Thaçi*] from Belgrade and Pristina. After having passed the difficult moment on the dialogue, it was for me a personal satisfaction to see a renewed determination to address all the outstanding issues of the dialogue and I'm convinced we will have good results in the months to come.

So we are there in difficult times. We are there in positive times, we are there when it is a matter of investing in infrastructures or in difficult institutional reforms, or in difficult judiciary reforms, or in difficult political transitions. And the list could continue, case by case, capital by capital. Because we know, as Europeans, that it is when we invest in peace, cooperation, good neighbourly relations that our people are better off. This is simply our experience inside the European Union and it is quite easy and simple: it is only sometimes difficult to remind ourselves in these difficult times. This is the European way in this new reality.

Where others see fault lines and spheres of influence, we try to bridge differences and create spaces for win-win solutions and cooperation. Between chaos and cooperation, the European Union has always and will continue always to make its choice clearly. And, again, I know that the issues on the table might be many and I am sorry I am going to miss what is going to be a very interesting panel with so many friends – not only in the region but also around the world.

But I think this is really time for us to come together because when the challenges are so difficult, it is somehow a must, somehow a responsibility we have towards our citizens everywhere in the world to try to identify the common ground and work hard to make it work. It is sometimes more difficult to build cooperation and peaceful ways rather than enter into a conflict. But for sure the results are there to stay much longer and I believe with all the difficulties we have had in the last year, also inside the European Union, that the European Union experience proves it.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia [Borut Pahor] was reminding this to us all a few hours ago. One year ago here in Bled, the mood was different about the European Union. It was all about crises and the perspectives of a Union that was going to dissolve itself. Today we see that the world needs us as a point of reference to uphold the multilateral agenda, to uphold a corporate vision of foreign policy. It is a big responsibility. We are there to fulfil it. I thank you very much.

Q. You talked about accession, you talked about the 6 and you talked about practical measurable progress to make it irreversible with EU accession. I think I have to ask you given that the Turkish Foreign Minister [Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu] is here as well. There is the issue of Turkey and he has already written before today that the accession to the EU continues to be Turkey's

strategic objective. But last night in the German election debate, Chancellor Merkel said very clearly that it is clear that Turkey should not become a member of the EU and Martin Schulz - the leader of the SPD - said that it is time to end the accession talks. Can you give us some thoughts of the way how this is seen in Brussels please?

With pleasure. Indeed, because Mevlüt [Çavuşoğlu] and I sometimes have difficult conversations. We had our last High Level [political] Dialogue in Brussels, in July. There are many issues on which the work between the European Union and Turkey gets difficult and I could list some of them, you will know them from human rights to fundamental freedoms.

But one thing is clear: first of all that dialogue continues, work on negotiations continues, that Turkey is a candidate country for the moment. We might have an internal discussion in the European Union, as they might have an internal discussion in Turkey on whether this will change - for the moment this is not the case.

I would like to add one thing on the foreign policy angle. We always focus on EU-Turkish relations in the context of accession negotiations and this is understandable. And, sometimes, we tend to forget that Turkey is a key player in a region that is strategically important for us - the Middle East, the Mediterranean. It is a country with whom we are working on some files that are fundamental, strategic both for us and for them, from counterterrorism, to the Cyprus issue, to Syria and I could continue.

So, I would say something maybe that we do not repeat very often: even beyond the considerations about the accession of Turkey and the negotiations, the European Union and Turkey are partners - difficult partners sometimes on both sides, we know that well, but we work together on many different files. Working together is a must when you are neighbours and we are. You do not choose geography, you do not choose or change history. You can find ways to understand each other better; you can find ways in which you can work on some files that are strategically important for both sides in a cooperative, in a constructive manner, in a useful manner for both.

What is clear is that negotiations on accession have their own criteria and statements on different sides have an impact on the mood but what counts is the results, is the steps that can be taken.

We have lived a couple of difficult years. On the future I would suggest that we look

beyond what is said in the electoral campaigns both in Turkey and in the European Union. I am looking forward to the moment when we can sit together at the table and define what is going to be the future of our relations. Thanks.

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