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President of the Republic of Latvia

Prize of Peace of Westphalia - Laudation

I.

Dear prizewinners! Ladies and Gentlemen

1. The Federal Republic of Germany, the City of Münster and the Economic Society for Westphalia and Lippe (WWL) have decided to honor Latvia twice in a very short time:
2. First, by awarding the Westphalian Peace Prize to my country, Latvia, in 2018, together with our two Baltic neighbors, Estonia and Lithuania, all three of which achieved the restoration of their national sovereignty on their own thirty years ago.
3. And now, for the second time, by entrusting the Head of State of Latvia with the honor and responsibility of delivering the laudatory speech for the latest awarding of the Westphalian Peace Prize, which will be awarded to the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia Zoran Zaev and the former Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras.**II.**
4. But my joy at being back in Münster today is also very personal. 49 years ago, as a 17-year-old young man whose family came to Germany from the Soviet-occupied homeland, I received my German Abitur here at the Latvian Gymnasium.
5. Another ten years later, I taught politics and history here as a teacher at the Latvian Gymnasium.
6. The historic and at the same time young university city of Münster with its Latvian Center and the Latvian Gymnasium was a kind of Latvian capital in the free world for the Latvians in exile at the time.**III.**
7. Münster is diverse and worth living in. Historically, however, it is above all the city of the Peace of Westphalia.
8. Today we honor two European statesmen here in Münster. Their great achievement is the conclusion of the Prespa Agreement on 12 June 2018, which resolved the long-standing differences between the two neighboring states of Greece and North Macedonia.
9. The differences concerned the name of the Republic of North Macedonia and were rooted in the different views on the history of this region and the identity of the nations there. The Prespa Agreement found a new level in which the different views on the name and the different historical perspectives were integrated into a new perspective that today allows the Greek and North Macedonian nations to coexist amicably. This agreement paved the way for North Macedonia to join NATO and, in the future, the European Union.
10. What better place to pay tribute to two statesmen who laid the lasting and sustainable contractual foundation for good neighborly relations between two neighboring countries than here in Münster, in this hall where the Peace of Westphalia was signed 373 years ago?

11. At that time, the Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War in Germany and the Eighty Years' War of Independence in the Netherlands. These long wars lasted several generations and devastated large parts of Europe.
12. The historic negotiations at the time lasted five years. During these long, grueling years, all sides had to be prepared to compromise. Difficult, but necessary compromises for the sake of peace.
13. The most important quintessence of the Peace of Westphalia was that this peace treaty created a new international order in Europe. A new order based on the legal equality of sovereign states.
14. As a lawyer, I can say that the new age of the modern state, the age of the sovereign nation state, was placed on a firm contractual footing.
15. The Peace of Westphalia was born, and although the borders are different today, Europe and the political map of Europe would be unthinkable today without the Peace of Westphalia. The Peace of Westphalia established a new way for states to deal with each other.
16. We continue to benefit from this new way, namely the sovereignty and equality of all states under international law. These principles, first declared in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, still form the basis of the international peace order today. These principles are also the basis for the United Nations Charter of 1945.
17. Although today, almost four centuries later, the role of the sovereign state, both internally and externally, has changed fundamentally, the sovereign state, in Europe in the form of nation states, complemented and supplemented by the European Union and other supranational entities, remains the focus of every nation, the place and the core of democracy.
18. It can be assumed that the politicians and warlords involved in the negotiations at the time were not aware of the consequences that would still have an impact hundreds of years later. However, they sensed the fatigue and exhaustion of all sides involved in this war, which could not lead to a satisfactory end to the war for either party. They strove to protect their own interests as much as possible, but above all they painfully realized that the ultimately hopeless situation that had depopulated and destroyed Europe had to end so that a new beginning could begin.
19. A new beginning in Europe meant peace, keeping the old - it still meant destruction, famine, pandemics, death and war. For the sake of this new beginning, they were prepared to make compromises. In some cases, they painfully gave up their own interests. But the new, the peace after several decades of devastation and war, seemed more advantageous and more important.
20. There are good compromises and there are bad compromises. In the end, a good compromise knows no losers, only winners. By transferring the former conflicts of interest to a new, higher order, they dissolve and clear the way for fruitful cooperation between the former opponents.
21. The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 was historically a good compromise that still has an impact centuries later.**IV.**
22. Today, in this historic place, we pay tribute to two politicians who concluded the Prespa Agreement 370 years later.
23. What do the Peace of Westphalia and the Prespa Agreement have in common?
24. What they have in common is the spirit and the will to overcome long-standing differences and to find creative power together to create something new and

better. This spirit, this idea, unites the two treaties despite the distance of several centuries, despite the different geographical areas of application, despite the different subjects of regulation.

25. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the true spirit of a good compromise, and it is precisely this spirit of good compromise that characterizes the Prespa Agreement that makes the two architects of this agreement, today's prizewinners, outstanding laureates, worthy recipients of the Westphalian Peace Prize.
26. Whereas in the case of the Peace of Westphalia, power politics as well as economic and military interests had to be reconciled, the conflicting interests in the case of the negotiations for the Prespa Agreement were different. The focus was on the different cultural perspectives on history and the present.
27. In a certain sense, a political balance of power is easier to achieve than a balance between different perspectives on history and the world as a whole.
28. In the case of a power-political or economic balance, the gains and losses are calculable and negotiable, and the abandonment of previous positions can be more easily compared and offset against the advantages of future positions.
29. In the case of different world views, this is much more complicated because the different perspectives are difficult to compare. There is no common "currency", so to speak.**VI.**
30. We should always be aware that our own view of the world, influenced by our past and present, may well be different from our neighbors' view of the world. Moreover, history is indeed different because every person and every nation experiences history and the present differently.
31. Every person experiences the world in their own unique way due to their background, upbringing and experience. This illustrates the uniqueness of each individual. But nations are also shaped by different historical experiences. We, the Latvians, see the world, organize and evaluate historical events and developments differently than, for example, our hosts today, the Germans.
32. However, the fact that individuals and entire nations perceive the world differently due to their experiences in the broadest sense is only half of the truth.
33. The other half, which is often not so evident, is that most people nevertheless see the basic moral values from which they judge the world at least similarly. The more existential the level or problem appears, the more similar the world view becomes.
34. Therefore, in order to resolve conflicts on the surface, one must uncover the basic moral foundation, and from there embark on a new path.

35. This is especially true when the different views lead to serious differences between nations that disrupt coexistence.
36. Responsible politicians are then called upon to find a viable *modus vivendi* or, even better, to resolve the differences completely.
37. The best way to find a *modus vivendi* or to eliminate the differences is to emphasize and focus on the commonalities that usually exist in any case.
38. In other words, the previous differences should be transferred to a new level, to the level of universal common ground, in the sense of a good compromise.

This is not always easy. But this is where the true creative greatness of a politician with statesmanlike qualities is revealed.**VIII.**

39. And this was precisely the path that you, dear prizewinners, took to conclude the Prespa Agreement. You have valued the similarities between your countries more highly than the differences that divide them. The result is a fair, good compromise.
40. The higher level that they have found together is the European level.
41. Both states that they have represented are European states. European states - this is not just a geographical or political term. Nor is it just the member states of the European Union. They are all democratic states in Europe that are linked by common historical and cultural ties and by the will to shape the future together in our part of the world.
42. With the Prespa Treaty, you, dear prizewinners, have not only signed a legal document, but have also found a truly European solution to a problem that is disruptive for both your countries and the entire region.
43. The road to this was long and thorny.

VII.

44. When both sides signed an Interim Agreement in 1995, the signatories were still referred to as "the parties on one side" and "the parties on the other side", without even mentioning the names of their nations in the text or in the lists.
45. Today, twenty-six years later, and now that you have reached and signed this historic agreement, allow me to call you by your names, Alexis and Zoran, and no longer "the parties of one side" or "the parties of the other side" ...**IX.**
46. Greece and North Macedonia have set a remarkable standard with the conclusion of the Prespa Agreement under your leadership. I would like to emphasize three guiding principles of the agreement
47. The *first* guiding principle is the **will for peace**. In a deeper, philosophical sense, which also has religious roots.
48. There is no doubt that we recognize that our modern democratic societies are secular. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to forget the religious roots of our continent. Christianity was the fundamental matrix. Judaism also has an undisputed role to play, which is reflected in the principles of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Islam, which has been an integral part of many nations on our continent from the 7th century until today, is gaining importance in all our societies.
49. The former judge at the Federal Constitutional Court and, in my opinion, one of the most important legal philosophers of our time, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, said in his famous dictum: "The secular state lives from the moral conditions that it cannot create itself". This means that we must treat these moral conditions with care and responsibility.
50. Let me emphasize at this point: If all the great world religions have one particular thing in common - and there are many - it is their teachings on the value of peace and life and on the special merit of the guardians and pioneers of peace. Today's celebration is the right place to remind ourselves of this.**X.**
51. The *second* guiding idea, without which this agreement would not have come about, is the idea of **self-reflection**, especially **critical self-reflection**. This is the intellectual competence to perceive oneself from a meta-position. This method was already practiced by the ancient Greek philosophers. In our context, it means modifying one's own arguments to protect one's own

national interests in such a way that they continue to support the national interest, but this time in a way that is compatible with the arguments of the other side. This is the right method that leads to a good compromise.**XI.**

52. And the *third* guiding principle of the agreement is **Europe**. Europe as the common political, economic and cultural area in which our states and nations live together peacefully and prosperously and shape our future together. There is no doubt that the agreement is of fundamental importance for the two nations involved, Greece and North Macedonia.
53. However, this agreement also has a positive impact on all European nations, including my home country, Latvia, because it has eliminated the source of long-lasting differences between two states on our continent, which had a negative impact on the political and economic situation, on the security situation in our part of the world.
54. The Prespa Agreement gave the green light for North Macedonia to join NATO two years later. This made the most successful defense alliance in history stronger and our common Europe more secure.
55. Now that the Republic of North Macedonia has joined NATO, it is time for the missing piece of the puzzle, namely the final clarification of the future of the Western Balkans in Europe, to follow. This future task will test the credibility of the European Union. It is my sincere wish that the Prespa Agreement will serve as a benchmark and an incentive for the solution of this great task.

XII.

56. Dear Alexis, dear Zoran!
57. You have agreed in dialog on a win-win solution in a spirit of generosity. And in doing so, you have achieved a great deal both for your nations and for Europe. You have insisted on objective criteria and negotiated on the essentials. You tried to achieve a result based on standards and you achieved it.
58. You argued together and did not close your minds to the concerns and arguments of the other side. They were guided by reason, not irrational pressure. They gave in to the cause, not to pressure. This is the hallmark of principled negotiations.
59. You have set an example for the future that will resonate in the Balkans and beyond.

XIII.

60. Dear prizewinners, ladies and gentlemen!
61. Here, in Münster, 373 years ago, the then new international legal order was founded, based on the sovereignty and equality of all states. These principles, which are also laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, are still valid without compromise. They are the basis for peace in the world.
62. *However, we are aware that many of the problems we face in the world of the 21st century and the new challenges we will have to overcome in the near future are no longer confined within national borders.*
63. *In conclusion, I would like to recall the words of Kofi Annan thirteen years ago when he received the same prize here in Münster. He said at the time that*

national sovereignty is "no longer just a privilege of states, but their responsibility to improve the lives of their people".

64. Ultimately, *how* we deal with the sovereignty of our states is crucial for the well-being of nations and the entire international community.

65. You, Mr. Alexis Tsipras and Mr. Zoran Zaev, as representatives of your states and their sovereignty, have created a resilient foundation for good neighborly relations between the two nations and have thus achieved an outstanding performance.

66. You deserve the Westphalian Peace Prize for this sovereign deed of yours.

Thank you for your attention