

**SPEECH BY FOREIGN MINISTER OF UKRAINE BORYS TARASYUK AT THE CONFERENCE
"SOLIDARITY TWENTY FIVE YEARS ON – LESSONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM"**

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Dear friends!

25 years ago a movement was born, which by its strength much exceeded the strongest totalitarian system in the world. It is my honour to be at this symbolic day here in Gdansk, the cradle of **the legendary "Solidarność"**, at the gathering of renowned and esteemed leaders and back-bone members of this movement.

I am speaking here in two capacities: as a representative of new democratic Ukraine, of new Ukrainian government and as a leader of political partner of "Solidarność", the People's Movement in Ukraine - the RUKH.

Initially being a simple and understandable demand of Polish workers to elect their Trade Union representatives, it grew into the **movement for freedom**, which deadly undermined the foundations of the Soviet totalitarian system and brought about fundamental changes to the global geopolitical chessboard. Its dedication to the ideals of freedom and democracy had made a major impact on the development of the Central and Eastern Europe and whole European civilisation in the last quarter of the century.

"Solidarność" has inspired the emergence of other movements in Central and Eastern Europe – "Sayudis" in Lithuania, People's fronts in Latvia and Estonia and, of course, the **RUKH** or the People`s Movement in Ukraine, which like "Solidarność" has brought about fundamental changes in Ukraine, led our society to restoration of independence of Ukraine.

Let me remind you that 16 years ago, at the founding session of the RUKH in September 1989 Ukrainian patriots welcomed their partners - democrats from many neighbouring countries among which there were honorable representatives of the Polish Solidarity.

Ever since co-operation between the two movements was gaining momentum, including the warm relationship between **Vyacheslav Chornovil and Lech Wałęsa**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The wave of democratic transformations launched by the "Solidarność" in 1980 had reached Ukraine in 1991 with the official restoration of independence, for which Ukrainians fought for centuries. But unlike in Poland restoration of independence did not elevate democrats to power.

However, the spirit of "Solidarność" and Rukh reverberated once again in 2004 to put an end to the oligarchic corrupt regime and thus to affirm a real independence and freedom coming from the hearts of the Ukrainian people.

It is symbolic that it was democratic Poland in the person of President Lech Wałęsa who first extended a friendly hand to newly independent Ukraine in December 1991 and, together with President Alexander Kwasniewski, rendered valuable personal support to the final victory of the Orange Revolution in 2004.

Dear friends,

When contemplating the history of "Solidarność" and making parallels with the latest history of my country, I can not forgo the godfather and ardent supporter of your movement the **Pope John Paul II**.

I recollect his compassionate plea back in 1979 when he said „**Let the holy spirit descend and renew the face of the Earth**”.

And indeed, the spirit of "Solidarity" had not only persisted as memories of the glorious days. It doubled its strength as **the Orange Revolution** burst through the corrupt unpopular regime of Kuchma giving the ordinary Ukrainians the chance to govern their own country. The simple demand of millions of Ukrainians to decide their fate themselves led to a major political change in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

For Ukrainians the year 2004 is not less symbolic than the year 1989 for Poles or the

year 1990 for Germans.

Today, **a new Ukraine** looking into the future, and its people, free and proud, opened up to Poland, to the entire world.

Supremacy of the Citizen over the State, rule of law, freedom of the media are at the heart of our internal and external policy. Despite difficulties and many problems inherited from the previous administration, the new authorities of Ukraine abide by the principles of transparency in decision-making, anti-corruption policy, cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

During today's discussion Ukraine was mentioned by one of participants among the countries, where "democratic institutions are fragile". Let me disagree with this statement. Orange revolution and victory of people, who defended democracy and their human dignity, demonstrated emergence of a new reality, which did not exist before, – viability of civil society in Ukraine. This is the best guarantor of further development of democratic institutions.

Despite the established opinion – also in the West - the Orange Revolution did not divide the country. To the contrary, it started the process of **real unification in the society based on European values of democracy**. I am confident that this unity will last not less longer than the spirit of solidarity, entering every country, every soul, finally uniting Europe.

At the break of 2004-2005 for the first time in the centuries long history the **Ukrainian-Polish relations** had reached the peak of their good-neighbourly spirit. And since that time, hand-in-hand with friendly Poland Ukraine paves its way to a new historic reality in the united family of European nations.

The Revolution of Roses in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine started a new age in the history of our region, as well as in the history of Europe. These revolutions were followed, if not instigated, by relatively similar events in different parts of the world – Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon. Political changes in these countries reflect further inevitable democratic developments in this part of the continent. There have already been a number of initiatives that testify to new approaches in

Ukraine's regional foreign policy.

The new emerging regional organisation for democracy and development connecting the nations between the Black and Caspian Seas and based on the grouping of **GUAM** is to play a key role in accomplishing this mission.

Such partnerships make up the regional policy of Ukraine and its friends, which is aimed to promote an area of democracy, stability and prosperity among newly independent states. These countries are united not by their common past, but by their common future, which is in the **European Union and NATO**, in a united Europe without dividing lines.

Quite recently, on August 12, 2005 President **Yushchenko** together with his colleague President **Saakashvili** of Georgia issued a Joint statement in which they agreed to create a community of democracies in our part of Europe: the Community called **Democratic Choice**.

The objective is to make this new community a strong tool to free our region from all remaining dividing lines, from violations of human rights, from any spirit of confrontation, from frozen conflicts and thus to open a new era of democracy, security, stability and lasting peace for the whole of Europe, **from the Atlantic to the Caspian Sea**.

The same is true for the Baltic - Black Sea Cooperation Process, which starts to recover from several years of oblivion.

This is to say that Ukraine does not mean to take care of its backyard only.

The spirit of solidarity is universal, it lives within every person and every nation striving for freedom. It is our duty to answer the call of these nations, to help them stand up off their knees, like Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, Georgians and Ukrainians did, and enjoy the same happiness while breathing the fresh air of freedom and democracy, the taste of which they will never forget.

We shall make all efforts to foster the roots of democracy in our neighbourhood. This

goal can be achieved by two principal means.

First, to set our own example as democratic and prosperous nations.

Second, through cooperation of the countries that share the values of democracy. As Ukraine, Poland and many of our neighbours do.

I am sure that the time will come for others to follow our example. Right after the World War II the globe looked very insecure with tiny islands of democracies. Today, the global political picture is exactly the reversed image of the past. I strongly believe that in another 60 years from now we shall come much closer to the global community of democracies.

The spirit of Solidarność and Maidan will prevail.

Thank you for your attention.