

## SPEECH OF PRIME MINISTER PANDELI MAJKO AT THE “BUCHAREST SUMMIT 2002”

**Dear colleagues,**

Without wishing to repeat what my colleagues already said, I would like to briefly reiterate the full commitment of the Albanian Government to the membership of our country in the Euro-Atlantic structures. We became even more aware of the need to become a NATO member after our common experience during the conflict in Kosova.

This is a membership, which does not only bring common security benefits to us. We should also be able to fulfill our obligations stemming from our integration into the Alliance and the collective defense requirements. From this point of view, the MAP process has been a useful period and a learning experience for Albania. We are now in its third cycle and with the Prague summit approaching we are convinced that the synergy existing between our domestic and multi-faceted reforms and the efforts for NATO membership will yield the results we expect.

It is clear to all of us that the tragic events on 11 September 2001 triggered not only worldwide reaction and solidarity, but they also highlighted the need for the adoption of energetic and well-coordinated measures against international terrorism.

Considering the international terrorism as a danger and challenge to the entire civilized world, Albania joined from the very outset the common front of the fight against it. We knew that this was a complex war, a war that was to be fought on the political, legal, military, and economic fronts. In this framework, the Albanian Government prepared and adopted the National Strategy on the fight against terrorism. The Strategy, which has involved many state institutions and non-government partners, consists in the implementation of a number of specific and well-focused measures and actions to strengthen the national security. In this framework, the Albanian Government is working on strengthening border control in close cooperation with the neighboring countries. Meanwhile, the Bank of Albania and the Finance Ministry, in cooperation with the national and international specialist bodies, are exercising a continuous control to identify and prevent the deposits and the flow of dirty money for terrorist purposes.

The fight against terrorism is a challenge to the ability of the civilized and democratic world to communicate and cooperate better. It is a challenge for us to accelerate the processes of the membership in prestigious organizations such as NATO and the EU.

It should never be forgotten that the international dimension of the terrorism and criminality is an alarming phenomenon, to which we should respond by stepping our common efforts to reach the required standards, stand up to this phenomenon and put an end to it. Being fully aware of the importance of such action, the Albanian Government has been fully committed to the cooperation with and the integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. We know that without such integration the struggle against terrorism, trafficking, and organized crime will be even more difficult.

In this framework, Albania and the Albanian Government are continuing to attach a special attention to the bilateral and multilateral regional relations, becoming, thus, a factor of stability in the Balkans. Albania, which until a few years ago, consumed stability, is now producing regional stability. There have been many positive developments in the SEECP process during Albania's presidency term. Ministers of Public Order and Energies have met for the first time in the SEECP framework to discuss common measures that are needed to deal with specific problems. The meeting of the parliamentary chairmen of the SEECP member countries was successfully held in Tirana recently and the summit of the heads of the state and government will take place in Tirana on 28 March 2002. This intensity of meetings at different political levels has created a very favorable climate for cooperation. It has helped our countries to achieve a more effective regional cooperation for a better control of the borders and for a coordinated fight against illegal trafficking activities.

In order to achieve these objectives, we have initiated economic and military reforms. It has become common knowledge now, I think, that the economic policies are closely related with security issues. Therefore, the implementation of national security reform programs is coordinated with the implementation of programs for economic and social stabilization.

Further reduction of the armed forces, demilitarisation programs, destruction of small arms, light weapons, antipersonnel mines, and major equipment, and toxic waste disposal are some of the programs in support of confidence building measures, which Albania would really like to see taking place in the whole region.

Our programs for the destruction of small arms and light weapons are perhaps the best testimony to our political commitment to the efforts for the creation of a new environment of peace in the Balkans and beyond. We are perhaps the only country to have been self- demilitarised.

A new tendency for regional democratic stability and close cooperation is taking shape in our region. We take this opportunity to warmly welcome the agreement among the political parties in Kosova on the election of the president and the formation of the government. The establishment and the operation of these democratic institutions, including the multi-ethnic parliament, will contribute to the consolidation of the democracy and the social and economic development of Kosova and this will,

no doubt, have its positive impact on the region and further afield. We are convinced that in the present great epoch of the globalisation Kosova has no other course to follow but its membership into the great European family. The Albanian Government has greatly appreciated the role and contribution of the UNMIK and KFOR to the restoration of the stability and the promotion of cooperation and coexistence among various ethnic groups in Kosova.

The Albanian Government also welcomed the recent agreement between Serbia and Montenegro. It thinks that dialogue and peaceful solutions, which require the existence and operation of democratic governments, are the only way to cope with the complex problems prevailing in the Balkans.

On the developments in Macedonia, Albania has continuously expressed its support for the integrity and sovereignty of this country, while also demanding the full implementation of the human rights in full compliance with the advanced European standards. Though we think that progress could have been faster, we think that the Ohrid Agreement should be fully implemented, as a basis for reaching peace, stability and cohabitation. In view of the fragility of the situation we consider the NATO presence in this country as a factor of stability and a long-term guarantee for the consolidation of on-ground security.

Dear colleagues,

The challenges lying ahead of us are challenges of the further civilization and democratisation of our region. Without the acceleration of the regional integration our integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures would be a longer and more demanding process. We are working to shorten this process, because this is in the interest of our peoples, peace, and democratic progress.

Albania is playing an important role in strengthening regional peace and stability through co-operation and confidence building measures and activities. As an aspiring country, Albania has forged a national consensus on its support for the commitments of the Alliance and the international community in the Balkans. Albania is strongly committed to the joint efforts aimed to create a new friendly security environment in the region. During the past few years, with its resolute stand in favour of regional peace and stability Albania has been a factor of stability in the region.

Albania's long-term foreign and security policy objective is the country's integration into trans-Atlantic and West European political, military and economic structures. Its successful integration, especially into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, are expected to bring more political and economic benefits and stability to the country.

The goal of Albanian's military reform strategy is to create a more effective and capable force, which can protect the sovereignty of the country. The reorganisation of our Armed Forces is intended to make the military inter-operational with NATO and capable of contributing units to international peace keeping operations, thus enabling Albania to contribute to regional stability.

One of the key priorities of the Membership Action Plan (MAP)-2002 is the Defence Review and the Implementation Plan on the restructuring of the AAF. This process is already underway. The Defence Review process is based on the newly created regional security environment, favourable NATO presence in the region, and affordable financial support for the country's defence. The basic components of the Defence Review and long term Implementation Plan are in full harmony with the comprehensive Defence Assessment, which was conducted by US with the agreement of the Albanian Government during 2000-2001, as well as with the NATO recommendations in previous MAP and PARP cycles.

The development of units with comparable NATO operational capabilities has been one of the priorities for the Albanian Armed Forces during the past few years. Due to limited resources, the efforts have been concentrated on the establishment of specific priority units. Significant results in the development of inter-operational capabilities are reflected in the units, which have been made available for the NATO-led Peace Support Operations and regional South Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG).

Positive results have also been achieved in the reforms in the armed forces. However, further assistance is still needed to develop inter-operational systems, projects and concepts throughout the force structure. To this purpose, the United States, Germany, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Denmark and other NATO countries are providing valuable assistance through the implementation of specific important projects. Britain, Canada, Norway and the Netherlands have been increasingly involved in supporting our needs. The new member countries have been recently closer to cooperation with Albania. I would like to thank all of them for their honest and important support and I assure them that their assistance will have its positive impact on the consolidation of peace and stability in the region.

Albania is making efforts to be among the countries invited for NATO membership at the Prague Summit, 2002. It will continue to guide its policies toward meeting all the membership requirements through the implementation of well-coordinate national programs in political, economic, military, legal and information security areas. We consider our contribution to collective security and our benefits from the membership of equal importance.