

Diplomacy as an Instrument of Good Governance

Statement of Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky
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at the International Conference on Modern Diplomacy
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Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I wish to begin my statement by expressing my deep gratitude to the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic studies for convening this Conference on Modern Diplomacy.
2. For the first time top specialists from different countries are gathered to discuss, in all aspects, diplomacy as an instrument of international communication and negotiation.
3. It is not by chance that Malta has initiated this meeting. For all who are involved in international politics, this country has been associated with very successful diplomacy since the first days of its independence in 1964. The handwriting of Maltese diplomacy can be clearly seen in the activities of the United Nations and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in promoting regional cooperation in the Mediterranean.
4. Our conference is a most timely event.
5. Each time a major transformation in the international system occurs, the role of diplomacy in world politics is revised. This issue was on the international agenda at the beginning of the twentieth century, and now, on the threshold of the new millennium, the debate reoccurs. The exchange of views among the participants will help to better understand what should be the purpose and the method of diplomacy in the age of global transformation.
6. The efforts of the international community to find diplomatic solutions to the present Iraqi crisis adjoin a supplementary flavour to our conference.

New Challenges

7. One hundred years ago the question of the future of diplomacy was raised as a result of technological progress - the invention of the radio and telegraph and the intervention of public into the domain of foreign policy. The first factor brought the apprehension that diplomats would become "honorary mailmen" and the second raised the issue of open diplomacy. However, the role of diplomacy in the XX century has not been restricted by these two factors.

8. The functioning of diplomacy is influenced by a complicated combination of different interrelated factors and I would like to start with a brief analysis of their impact on the evolution of diplomacy.

9. To begin with, there is a set of *political factors*. During most of the twentieth century, two world wars, the cold war, the rivalry of two super-Powers, the ideologization of international affairs and military confrontation, have made diplomacy a subsidiary instrument of power politics and ideology. As a result, diplomacy has very often executed the "dance of death". The end of the cold war has radically changed the international political scene. Moreover today we are facing the shift of the civilizational paradigm, which affects not only the major units of world politics - the States - but which also brings new actors into the forefront of international relations.

10. The major political factor influencing diplomacy is the relative decline of the role of the national governments. Today governments are facing stern competition from other actors. Private sector, religious groups, immigrants, media and other entities of the civil society are demanding from the government that their interests be taken into consideration and that they have a say in making and implementing foreign policy. People want to travel freely, to conduct business abroad or to be involved in various types of cultural exchange.

11. Perhaps the most active "intruders" into the modern diplomacy from outside are NGOs. This is particularly well seen from the UN viewpoint. For example, in Geneva there are currently about 1,400 NGOs officially registered with the UN Office. All of them are international, and have branches in at least two or more countries. Although their status is different from that of the diplomats, in practice they often participate in the diplomatic process, in particular in the promotion and discussion of such issues as human rights and

environmental protection. Nowadays, international decisions are more often shaped according to the opinions of the NGOs. Gradually they are expanding the sphere of their influence. Last year NGOs prevented the adoption of the Convention on the Copyright Law in Electronic Media which was prepared by the International Telecommunications Union. Perhaps the most vivid example of their influence is the worldwide campaign to ban anti-personnel land-mines which led to the signature in Ottawa last December of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel mines.

12. Curiously, not only NGOs but legislative branches of the states themselves are contributing to this diplomatic process. The parliamentarians of the world have successfully set up a structure of global and regional interaction and are now claiming a role in diplomatic meetings which was traditionally reserved for the executive branch.

13. An important aspect of the "degovernmentalization" of foreign affairs is the growing involvement in the international interactions of local or provincial authorities. I had an opportunity to observe this phenomenon on numerous occasions. For example, it is not uncommon for the heads of a local government to visit a UN agency because they wish to participate in its programmes directly rather than through the national government. A few years ago this was difficult to imagine. During the conference of the mayors of the Mediterranean cities in Barcelona many recognized that they often have more close economic or cultural ties with their partners across the sea, than with their national capitals. Many big cities and provinces have enough resources not just to influence the national governments but also to actually maintain their own "diplomatic" agencies.

14. The immediate implication of this development for the diplomatic practitioners is that now, in addition to their colleagues representing formally recognized States, they also have to deal with numerous other non-State counterparts who conduct their own "foreign policy".

15. On the macro level, one of the major developments is the proliferation of multinational institutions and regional and subregional organizations. The EU, APEC, ASEAN, CIS, NAFTA, - this is just a short list of the most well-known transnational structures which claim part of their member's sovereignty. The major motive behind their creation is the same as in the case of the increased activity of the local authorities - to facilitate cross-border

cooperation and to weaken or eliminate restrictions imposed by the national States, such as customs tariffs.

16. The second set of factors that makes the life of a modern diplomat increasingly difficult is of an economic nature. In general I would say that *economic diplomacy* is gradually taking over the traditional politics-oriented diplomacy. A lot has been written in recent years about the phenomenal growth of transnational economic interactions. Indeed, with the huge expansion of international trade, the power of private companies and the electronic transfer of money, private entrepreneurs and fund managers are eclipsing central bankers and finance ministers.

17. Meanwhile the international economy is becoming more and more competitive. With the rapid development of the Pacific Rim countries, and the opening to the outside world of the economies of such huge States as China and Russia, the world market has expanded dramatically, but so has the number of economic actors. Governments everywhere are primarily concerned with maintaining the competitiveness of their economies. Accordingly, private economic decisions are now largely controlling political choices of the governments, and diplomats have to devote more time and energy than ever before to the creation of a favourable environment for trade and commerce.

18. Last but not least, an important factor influencing modern diplomacy is the *revolution in telecommunications*. This is a big issue that deserves special attention. Particular relevance to the diplomatic services are two technological developments - satellite broadcasting and digital networks, including the Internet. I will not go into detail on the technological problem, as this afternoon we will have a special session on this issue. I would like just to give you a few examples of the use of modern technology at the United Nations.

19. One of the functions of the diplomatic missions accredited to UNOG, is to collect UN documents and send them to their Foreign Ministries or other government agencies in their capitals. A few years ago UNOG introduced an electronic system of documents distribution. It is no longer necessary for the missions' staff to collect documents from the Palais des Nations - they can obtain them via computer connection without leaving their offices. Now we are about to introduce another innovation. Soon the documents database will be connected to the Internet. Accordingly, the Foreign Ministries will be able to retrieve the documents they need, directly bypassing the missions. In fact,

some Foreign Ministries have already subscribed to this new service and we have started to receive requests for particular documents. This could mean in particular that the missions are losing one of their functions.

20. To take a further example. Currently the senior managers at the UN are being provided with video-conferencing equipment. This technology is already widely used in many large companies. The cabinet meetings of the Secretary-General are held with the participation of Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi senior managers using video equipment. I understand that national foreign services are also experimenting with this kind of facility. In future we could easily imagine a situation where Presidents, Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers would be able to hold direct instantaneous face-to-face communication with each other, in addition to simultaneous data transfer. The consequences of this technological development for the diplomatic services could be quite significant. How should the role of the embassies or the missions change in this environment?

21. All this testifies to the increasing interdependence in the world. Now, problems which affect one part of the world's population can spread very rapidly to the entire planet. Like passengers of Leonardo de Vinci's ship, all of us - rich and poor, women and men, young and old, white and black - share a common destiny. In the words of Albert Einstein "the world is one or nothing".

22. The process of globalization, which strengthens the "oneness" of the world is, at the same time, accompanied by the fragmentation and localization by the growing gap between rich and poor nations. Moreover, this process is characterized by the acceleration of the pace of events. Time has become "compressed".

23. All these transformations bring new challenges for diplomacy on a global level: the maintenance of positive peace and comprehensive security, democratization, the promotion of human rights, economic cooperation and sustainable development, facilitation of humanitarian actions, prevention of terrorism and criminal activity.

24. Today diplomacy is called upon to help political and economic leaders to channel the global changes in an evolutionary, non-violent, democratic rule-based manner. One of its top priorities is facilitation of good governance, both on national and international levels. The prospect of good governance

provides an opportunity for the renaissance of diplomacy which, throughout the centuries, played the role of an intermediary between governments and acquired a unique experience in this field. Now it has a chance to become an instrument of international governance. How can diplomacy cope with this new challenge?

Diplomacy as an instrument of good governance

25. To begin with I should like to stress that for modern diplomacy, whose only asset is the software, it is important to maintain a balance between traditional innovations. Despite all the changes in the international environment the past experience of diplomacy is of great value and it is ultimately important to keep links in time. The classical texts on diplomacy of François De Calliers, Harold Nicolson, Ernest Sato and Jules Cambon are as useful reading for a diplomat today as they were a century ago.

26. One of the major lessons in the history of diplomacy is that the personal factors continue to play a key role.

27. As far back as in XVII century, a great Frenchman in diplomacy, François De Calliers wrote: "The good diplomat must have an observant mind, a gift of application which rejects being diverted by pleasures or frivolous amusements, a sound judgement which takes the measure of things as they are and which goes straight to the goal by the shortest and most natural paths without wandering into meaningless and endless refinements and subtleties. The diplomat must be quick, resourceful, a good listener, courteous and agreeable. Above all, the good negotiator must possess enough self-control to resist the longing to speak before he has thought out what he actually intends to say. He must have a calm nature, be able to suffer fools gladly, which is not always easy, and should not be given to drinking, gambling or any other fantasies. He should also have some knowledge of literature, science, mathematics, and law."

28. At the threshold of the XX century, another famous author, the British diplomat Ernest Sato, described diplomacy as an application of intellect and tact to conduct foreign affairs. In my view, a modern diplomat is discreet, practical, careful, and with a sense of responsibility. I also think that in modern diplomacy the feeling of momentum is of crucial importance. As a whole, diplomats are very good at preserving the traditions of their