



NEW CHALLENGES BETTER CAPABILITIES

21st - 22nd October 2009

SLOVAK ATLANTIC COMMISSION
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ACCOMPANYING CONFERENCE OF THE NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS MEETING IN BRATISLAVA, OCTOBER 2009

THE VOICES OF FREEDOM

October 21, 2009

20:00- 23:45

Venue: Umelecká beseda, Bratislava, Slovakia

1. THE SLOVAK STORY OF FREEDOM

a) Twenty years of freedom

Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Slovakia becomes the place where an international conference of world-wide importance, the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, takes place. Its significance is also underlined by the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of this eminent military alliance. Apart from that, 2009 is the year when the new Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has been elected and Bratislava is honoured to be one of the first places where he delivers his public address. The successful five-year performance of Slovakia as member of the community of developed countries has enabled this special gathering of ministerial delegations to take place. However, this has not always been a certainty.

After the Second World War, Slovakia became part of the so-called "Eastern Bloc" within the divided Europe. Democracy, freedom, rule of law and human rights were not guaranteed to those who found themselves on the "wrong side" of the Iron Curtain. Young people were not given the opportunity for their individual development and realization as it is nowadays. Geopolitics of the powerful states left Slovakia on the place where neither discussion nor criticism came into consideration. Twenty years ago, during the autumn period, which also meant "**the autumn of totalitarianism**", a new young generation made an end to four decades of non-democratic regime in former Czechoslovakia.

b) The young guardians of freedom

The values, upon which the society in Slovakia and in the Western countries is based, do not come automatically; therefore it is necessary to continually protect them. The history proved that those who had been doing so were predominantly students and youngsters. They are the particular group whose perception of the loss of freedom is the most tragic and as a result of that they are willing to fight for it in the front line.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, "**The Voices of Freedom**" will enable the meeting of young people from European countries to commemorate the past events and express their projection of the future. They will meet the major personalities who represent the November '89 changes and they will be given the chance to hear their authentic statements about the situation within the society during that time. In addition, these young people will come up with a message themselves, with their own ideas about where they want the society to head and how to find the adequate answers to all-society problems of today's world, which might seem secure at the first sight.



Co-organizers:





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2. SYMBOLISM

The main aim of The Voices of Freedom event is to address young people in an interactive way, to stimulate them towards thinking about common values that we share in the 21st century and which give us the irreplaceable opportunity for our active self-development. **The voice** refers to a mean for expressing the beliefs and opinions. Thanks to those young people who strived for their voices to be heard in the streets of 1989, we are free to express our ideas and opinions nowadays. It is essential to remind that security, as well as freedom of speech, is not a matter of course. Twenty years of democracy in Slovakia has resulted into our right to speak different voices, to confront them and to learn from each other.

Symbolic is also **the place** where the youth generation is about to meet. This is the exact place where, twenty years ago, the life-changing revolution in Slovakia started. This is the place where the group of young people and artists, who refused the denial of human freedom, used to meet. Together with their Czech friends they created the ground for the fall of non-democratic regime in Czechoslovakia. Twenty years later, they are coming back and together with the young generation they will revere the values they missed, the values they were fighting for. The exhibition of authentic photographs from the revolutionary times aims to deepen the atmosphere of the nexus between the years 1989 and 2009.

3. PROGRAMME OF THE EVENT

The event itself will be divided into three interactive parts, whereas the voices of the young people will not remain unheard. Each part of the programme includes the voice symbolism, which has different forms.

a) The Velvet Voices – 20:00

The event will be opened by singers, whose voices created an incentive and mobilized the society and young people for the opposition against the non-democratic regime before the outbreak of the Velvet Revolution. Since the audience will predominantly be composed of students from abroad, the songs will be subtitled in English on the screens. The printed lyrics of the songs will be distributed among the participants. Music connects individuals, groups, nations for the universal values of the good, truth and beauty. Music has the power to mobilize, to inspire, to galvanize for common goal and common values.

b) The Voices of Memory – 20:15

The individual and historical memory is invaluable, especially if it serves people to preclude the mistakes of the previous generations and to learn from them. Young people will listen to **the voice** of the previous generation, for which the values that we can fully enjoy and take advantage from were not a certainty at that time. It is worth doing to turn back in time, to point out and evaluate the negatives of the pre-November regime and eventually, in the discussion with the



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representatives of the youth, to find out what we have in common: Love to Freedom. In this part we plan to invite these significant figures of the 1989 revolutionary movement:

Pavol Demeš (moderator of the discussion)- Director for Central and Eastern Europe, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Zuzana Mistríková- student activist in Velvet Revolution, Slovak Television and Film Academy

Ladislav Snopko- founding member of movement "Public against Violence", one of the actors of Velvet Revolution, dramaturgist, archaeologist, publicist

Ján Budaj- founding member of "Public against Violence", politician

Anton Popovič- student activist in Velvet Revolution, musician, producer, arranger

Filip Vagač- student activist in Velvet Revolution, after 1989 civic activist

c) The Voices of Future – 21:30

"NATO Public Diplomacy and young people- symphony of voices?"

Introduction Remarks by **Jean Francois Bureau**, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy

The outcomes of 60 NATO **Voices** project, realised from August to October, will create a natural element of the second part of the Voices of Freedom event. The main aim of the 60 NATO Voices project is to compile a set of 60 interviews with young professionals in the field of international relations, who care about the values upon which the society is built and where it is heading. Their visions about the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation will be projected on the screen and might predict where we find ourselves in a few years. Presence of high- ranking NATO representative is the best occasion to deliver voice of youth to the "rightest ears". Young people, being aware of their past, but not burdened with the historical experience, will become "the guardians" and active defenders of the values upon which our transatlantic community is based.

d) Music and Entertainment – 22:30

Since the event is prepared for young people, the official programme will be followed by entertainment, which is – equally to freedom – appealing to the youth everywhere in the world regardless of the period of time they live in. Thus, an event-rich day full of intellectual incentives, will be finished by music and dancing.



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