

**OPENING ADDRESS BY DR. JÁNOS HÓVÁRI, THE DEPUTY STATE
SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY AT THE EXHIBITION
„FOURTEEN CENTURIES OF COINS FROM THE ISLAMIC WORLD”**

(Helikon Castle Museum in Keszthely, Hungary, February 17, 2011)

Dear Director László Czoma and Honorary President István Gedai,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Islam is historically and culturally associated with the history of Europe and constitutes an inseparable part of it. In the past centuries, Muslim scholars have made an outstanding contribution to progress on this continent as pioneers in astronomy, medicine, physics, chemistry, engineering and several other areas of science. In such a way, they have also made an invaluable contribution to the well-being and dignity of the people living in Europe today.

In Central Europe there is no other people or language that is tied by so many bonds to the Orient as we, the Hungarians are. The origin of our people and a number of subsequent chapters in our history, are closely connected with the Asian continent. To our people, the Orient represents more than just a simple geographical notion. We are very proud that oriental research has become an integral part of our national scholarly activities.

We are all aware of the fact that today the nations of the broader Middle East region face increasing challenges: persisting international tensions and conflicts, the widening of social inequality and poverty. The experience of the post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe, and especially the experience accumulated by Hungary could serve as an example of how a nation in transition can overcome a series of complex internal and international challenges. No matter how great the differences between Europe and the broader Middle East and North Africa may, to some observers, seem to be, our goals are identical and the underlying principles guiding us are universal: the rule of law, justice, respect for human rights and dignity, as well as a strong commitment to multilateralism.

More than two decades ago Hungary stepped on the long and arduous road of democratic transition. A road that has made us realise that good governance is the prerequisite of sustainable political, economic, and social development. To achieve that goal, let us build a solid partnership of democracy and stability; let us create a better and more secure world through our joint efforts!

As the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2011, Hungary has assumed even greater responsibility for stability and development not only in the immediate neighborhood of the EU but in the broader Middle East and Asia as well. Our diplomacy has adopted a global approach and is taking an active share in finding lasting solutions to the challenges of the modern world. It is more than obvious that in our times such solutions can be identified only by our governments working closely together and harmonizing our efforts.

Besides the formidable task and honor of currently being at the helm of the EU, we have set ourselves another major goal for the forthcoming two years. We believe that we are well prepared to be granted the opportunity to serve a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations beginning in January 2012. This would provide further possibilities to widen our already multi-faceted cooperation with the countries of the Islamic world. We have, I believe with distinction, already served on the Council twice, but this would be the first time that we could rely on our expertise as a former Presidency of the European Union.

When it comes to the voting procedure in the General Assembly in New York in the autumn, we would like to count on your friendly support. Let us cooperate now and in the future as vigorously as this vibrant interaction over the centuries is reflected by these precious coins exhibited here in the Helikon Castle Museum in Keszthely.

Thank you for your attention.