

Welcome speech by Mr. Iván Bába, Administrative State Secretary, on the opening of the exhibition

dedicated to the 20th anniversary of renewing diplomatic relations with the Baltic states at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

23 November, 2011

Dear Ambassadors,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Guests,

In August 1989 the world witnessed a special and unprecedented unity. On that day the citizens of the Baltic countries lined up holding each other's hands from Vilnius through Riga to Tallinn. This human chain clearly demonstrated that the Estonians, the Latvians and the Lithuanians didn't give up the freedom struggle to regain their independence forcibly abducted by the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact".

The unity of the nations of the Baltic States is an example, which the Estonians, the Latvians and the Lithuanians can be rightly proud of. Today we pay tribute and bow our heads all those who with their commitment, hearts, knowledge and if it was necessary, sacrificing their life recreated the democratic statehood and independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The aim of this exhibition is to remember and show what we reached and where are we going. Of course an exhibition in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focuses on diplomacy, the international and bilateral events. However, those of us, who were part of the events twenty years ago recall our own memories. The former head of the Hungarian diplomacy, Dr. Géza Jeszenszky at our last meeting recalled his personal memories of August 1991, when the Hungarian Government lead by Mr. József Antall adopted a declaration supporting the reestablishment of the independence of the Baltic States and in the same document declared the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact void.

Subsequently, on 2nd September 1991, ahead a number of our cautious partners, together with our three Baltic partners we signed the protocol on the restoration of diplomatic relations which “slept” since 1940 due to the Soviet occupation.

Twenty years have passed since then, and our Baltic friends can be rightly proud of the historical and unprecedented development they reached. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are all democratic and independent states, appreciated and respected reliable partners, member states of the NATO and the European Union. Today these three countries are good partners for Hungary and our relations may be characterized as smooth and friendly even from historical perspective. Our relations with the Baltic States are based on the partially shared past, the membership in identical alliances and unions, the same values and the close and common interests.

Our citizens are also increasingly interested in each other's values. A growing number of Hungarian tourists visit the ancient Baltic capitals' old town, the Lithuanian Trakai, the beach of the lower Latvian Jurmala or the Kumu Art Museum in Estonia. Today a significant number of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian tourists arrive to country, who are always welcome!

Perhaps even today some people look at the three Baltic States as a homogeneous group. There is no doubt that they have a lot in common, but Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are three truly unique beautiful countries with their own history, culture and traditions. Cherishing their own national identity, these people also preserve the Baltic identity. In other words they are searching for that connects them. They provide a good example for other countries as well. I think that this attitude is perfectly expressed by this exhibition, which I hereby open!

May I request you to view this exhibition with joy and open heart!

Thank you for your kind attention!