

**Peace and justice  
through  
international law and collective security**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished Guests,

I am truly grateful to the Norwegian Nobel Institute for inviting me here. It's a great honour to address members of an institution, whose contribution to the stability and progress of mankind is so commendable. **Peace is the highest social value that enables nations to flourish. It is also an object of basic human desire.**

"From pestilence, famine, fire, war. And from sudden, unexpected death, preserve us, oh Lord!"

For ages this prayer has been said by people striving for peace, security and justice. However, what proved to prevail time and again was human weakness and ambition, which inhibited us from living in peace.

**There is no stronger uniting factor for people across the globe than the desire to live in peace.** The obligation to prevent conflicts rests heavily on the shoulders of political leaders. It should constitute the essence of their actions, as peace is the most fundamental precondition allowing people to thrive.

Each and every time the world plunged into destruction and suffering, its leaders set out on building a better order, led by the very same thought: "never again". And they failed every single time.

When bilateral treaties proved to be ineffective in securing peace, they turned to multilateral arrangements. Step by step, during the course of history, the concept of universal international law and international institutions materialized. Their aim was to secure justice and maintain peace. It became clear that in order to reduce the risk of war, it is necessary to mitigate sovereign powers' right to use force against others.

**But then came the Second World War.** The experience of genocide and blatant violations of international rules of war, as well as humanitarian conventions undermined our belief in the progress of humanity. Being the first target of Hitler's and Stalin's coordinated aggression, **Poland learnt an important lesson before others did: we should collectively defend international law in order to secure peace and justice.**

Yalta agreements deprived Poles and other nations of Central and Eastern Europe of their fundamental rights. They were denied the right to choose their own leaders and shape their destiny according to their own will. This experience explains why today the Polish people demonstrate solidarity with the people of Ukraine, as well as any other nation in the

world fighting for its right to self-determination. We support their will to govern their own destinies without coercion, intimidation and a threat of war.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am speaking here on behalf of a nation, who has experienced a lot in the course of history. Polish people understand the true value of peace. However, we also know that **human freedom and dignity is priceless**. That is why we realize that in the long run **peace without justice cannot be maintained**.

*Injustice does not bring benefits to nations*, Prince Adam Czartoryski wrote in the Nineteenth Century. At the time when Poland was partitioned by its neighbors, that great Polish patriot defended the right of every nation to live in freedom and express its own will. He developed the idea of a union of states, following a shared system of law, based on moral values and willingness to secure peace and justice for the sake of common interests. Today, addressing the audience of the Nobel Institute: I would like to repeat in the same vein: **Injustice does not bring peace to people**.

There would be no justice in the world if the principle that all states are equal before international law was not respected. No matter how militarily strong or economically developed they

are. **We reject the imperial concepts, such as the balance of powers or the spheres of influence.** Ultimately, these notions lead to the balance of fear and bring peace to some, at the expense of others.

It was the fate of Poles and of other nations behind the Iron Curtain which pushed the countries of the free Europe into ever closer cooperation with each other and with the United States of America. This is how the idea of collective security emerged. In 1949 it led to the founding of NATO, **the alliance of the free world for peace by collective security.** And only after the Iron Curtain fell, could the nations of Central Europe freely express their will to join the democratic community of the Alliance. Thus they subscribed to its oldest motto coined by Lord Ismay, the first Secretary General of NATO: ***Peace first, peace last, peace all the time.***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**There is only one way to secure peace – and that is the law.** In the course of history Poles have been attached to the principle of peaceful coexistence of nations based on law, freedom and tolerance. The provost of my Alma Mater – the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, a distinguished lawyer and a catholic priest, Stanisław of Skarbimierz, in the face of a looming war between Poland and the Teutonic Order, wrote his famous “Treatise on Just War” (“De bellis iustis”). His work

begins with a call for peace as a natural state and a sharp reminder for the rulers that they should not resort to military measures unless it is necessary to restore peace or in self-defence. War, as stated by Stanisław, could be waged only in extraordinary circumstances.

Another Polish scholar of that time – Paweł Włodkowic defended the right to peaceful coexistence of all nations, regardless whether they were Christian or not. He opposed crusades, preaching that faith should be spread with words rather than a sword.

When others, in their striving for territorial expansion, conquered the weaker ones, Poland chose to refer to the principle of a union based on a voluntary alliance of nations. That is precisely how the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth came into being. While in most European countries despotism thrived, the Commonwealth continued to be a state of freedom and tolerance. A monarchy limited by law, founded on the principle of checks and balances, where the king cared for the entire political community, rather than imposed its will upon it. Most probably that was the reason why an English translator of one of the Polish Renaissance treaties noted down: *We and the Poles have indeed, for many years, been the only two Kingdoms, in which Monarchical Power and Popular Liberty have all along been happily united.*

Poles rejected all forms of radicalism and oppression. Only recently have my compatriots celebrated an anniversary of the adoption of the first European, and second in the world, Constitution, the so called 3<sup>rd</sup> May Constitution. That huge social and political reform was introduced in an entirely peaceful manner. Acting through the Parliament, the Polish Nation embarked upon the momentous process of ensuring equal rights to all citizens of the Commonwealth. It resulted directly from the Christian spirit of the Polish Community, which reminded the need to demonstrate mutual brotherhood. **The Constitution was an act of law, not an act of force.**

Back in those times it was less than obvious. In its longing for universal liberty, the Great French Nation chose the path of a revolution. **Poles however decided to refer to their parliamentary tradition and the principle of the rule of law. Europe admired that peaceful act of civic will.** Edmund Burke, an outstanding Irish thinker and a British statesman, described the adoption of the Polish constitution in the following way: *In contemplating that change, humanity has everything to rejoice and to glory in, nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to suffer. So far as it has gone, it probably is the most pure (...) public good which ever has been conferred on mankind.*

**These words stand a solid proof that Polish Nation has a deeply rooted tradition of supporting the idea of peace and justice through law.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Today, our responsibility for keeping peace through respect for the law is as important as ever.** Over the last few years we have witnessed yet another instance of a blunt violation of international law. Namely, of the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. **Such practices are neither to be accepted nor tolerated if future is dear to us.**

The great Alfred Nobel once stated: *Good wishes alone will not ensure peace.* I am confident that we all subscribe to this principle. That thought guided Trygve Lie, a Norwegian politician and the first Secretary General of the United Nations. Prior to taking that position, he headed the Norwegian delegation to the conference in San Francisco in 1945. He chaired the commission responsible for drafting the Security Council provisions of the United Nations Charter. And when in 1950 the world was yet again torn apart by the invasion of communism and a bloody conflict on the Korean Peninsula, he supported a decisive action against the aggressor without any hesitation.

It was then, on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1950, that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the resolution “Uniting for Peace.” **I wish to believe that this grand coalition – the coalition of those united for peace – still exists today and is ready to defend peace if needed.** Such a coalition is a dream of many great men come true, including the 15th century lawyers from Kraków, Prince Adam Czartoryski, as well as Alfred Noble and Trygve Lie. The latter, in his final speech to the UN General Assembly on April 7, 1953, called his seven years as Secretary-General the hardest and most challenging period of his life. But then he added: *Our organisation reflects the imperfections of our time, but it is also an expression of the most constructive forces of our world and a symbol of hope for the future.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having experienced two World Wars along with genocide, massacres and atrocities they caused, **we know very well that peace and justice should not be taken for granted.** They require our profound commitments and must be defended by all of us, both political leaders and our societies. **Not in words but in deeds.** It is for this reason, that the North Atlantic Alliance was established and founded on the principle of respect for freedom and democracy.

Facing the challenges of the present time, **this alliance should be strengthened to deter and defend us more effectively.** In the light of dramatic changes in the security environment unfolding right now, all members of NATO should contribute to the common good, which is collective security. There are some who doubt whether we can afford a system of enhanced security, allegedly too expensive and demanding in financial terms. **But we must remember that the price we shall pay now may save the lives of our citizens.** It is beyond any doubt that the costs of destroying peace have always exceeded the costs of its maintenance. **We deserve to live in peace and I am sure that we can afford it.**

Ladies and gentleman,

**We wish to continue on the road of dialogue among nations and respect for international law.** It is a universal desire, shared by all Nations. It provides a firm basis for our peaceful cooperation in the future. It helps us to view each other not with fear or suspicion but with openness and trust.

There is no peace without justice, just as there is no justice without international law.

**But above all, there is no international law without collective security!**

Thank you very much for your attention.