

**Speech by Mr. Cristian Diaconescu, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Romania at the event organized by SIPRI entitled:**

**„Moving forward with the Eastern Partnership: challenges and
opportunities”**

Stockholm, 4 September 2009

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking the organisers of this event, SIPRI, for providing the right scene for a serious exchange of views on this subject at the forefront of the European affairs agenda.

I would also thank the Swedish Government for their hospitality in providing this excellent location and for participating in our meeting.

The Eastern Partnership is a topical subject not only for reasons of agenda as, after being launched only four months ago, we are now, under the Swedish EU Presidency, in the phase of identifying the most effective and beneficial ways of implementing it.

I would start by mentioning an important event celebrated this year in Central and Eastern Europe: 20 years have passed since the Autumn of Change reshaped Europe and opened historical opportunities for the countries in the Eastern Block.

After Two decades since the Iron Curtain had fallen, we acknowledge that one of the most effective European value is that of supporting the transformational power of democracy.

The faith of the young people have changed Europe's destiny two decades ago. The call of millions and millions of young people defends,

even today, the freedom of expression, the freedom of the press, the pluralistic political party system.

We should never forget history. We should never forget where we are coming from. This is what strengthens the importance of the values we all share throughout Europe.

The Eastern Partnership countries' evolution affects us directly in many ways. Their stability, security and prosperity would impact positively on the EU as a whole. 20 years ago, Romania, Poland and the other Eastern European nations benefited from the support, attention and assistance of the Western community. Now it is our turn to take the process further and to grant the Eastern Partners our full support.

For all these reasons, we the Romanians consider that Eastern Partnership should become a powerful anchor for the new European identity.

We acknowledge the visionary contribution Sweden and Poland have undertaken in setting this Partnership - a solid stake in the European future unity.

On our side Romania has a duty to join the efforts and to prove its responsibility to a successful accomplishment of this endeavour.

We are ready to share our regional experience achieved in bringing closer Western Balkans to the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. We are willing to contribute together with our partners around Black Sea, to create closer links between Eastern Partnership and the larger European neighbourhood.

And we truly wish for the Eastern Partnership to uphold and to reinforce the common Euro-Atlantic values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During past years, the geo-political reality was more and more imprinted with a temptation to redefine geography, by mapping politics and economic interests.

But the simple drawing on a map of an Eurasian artificial space can no longer hide the legit aspirations to the values of democracy, openness and trustiness.

By rejecting the obsolete concept of spheres of influence, the Eastern Partnership offers a different path to development and to connect. Our European unity will be crucial in preventing new circumstantial carvings of the European map.

The need for stability based on democratic values, call for assistance and guidance from the EU in responding to the specific needs and aims of its Eastern neighbours.

The success will depend not only on the political commitment but also on a substantial bilateral assistance provided by the EU member states.

Cooperation with the Eastern Partners has already registered success stories. The Eastern Partnership allows us to build on the achievements, to offer models for cooperation and to expand existing links.

To give you just an example: the local authorities in Pitesti, Romania and Borlänge, Sweden have had a fruitful partnership since 1998, focussed on public utilities, environment and culture. They decided to share their positive experience and established a trilateral cooperation with the city of Chisinau, in the Republic of Moldova. At present, this has become a highly effective example of cooperation between Sweden, Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The Eastern Partnership will showcase these models, help them flourish and multiply the success stories.

It is a permanent feature of the Romanian foreign policy to engage in bilateral partnerships with countries in Eastern neighbourhood based on consistent projects and complementarities: European partnership with

Ukraine, a close cooperation with Georgia and a future partnership with Azerbaijan.

Our interest together with all EU member states is to encourage Republic of Moldova to progress on its European integration as the most valuable path for its stable development. We strongly support its integrity and sovereignty.

In what concerns the multilateral track, I believe its success depends on the respect of a number of **principles** we have learned from our extensive experience of regional initiatives in South East Europe, since the beginning of the nineties.

First, in order to deliver tangible results, cooperation should be streamlined, practical, project oriented and inclusive.

And then, looking back to what we did in the Southern and Central European region there is a basic prerequisite of any regional initiative: solidarity.

Schemes of regional cooperation need to be adapted to new realities, reloaded, I would say, in order to make them proficient tools in supporting the efforts of integration.

Another topic is the optimal way of articulating the Eastern Partnership with existing regional cooperation initiatives such as the Black Sea Cooperation, the Black Sea Synergy, the Northern Dimension.

A natural stimulus in fostering cooperation in the Black Sea region was the Northern side of Europe, the “Northern Dimension”, where regional cooperation has already reached tangible results, in the benefit of the local communities.

The Black Sea Synergy (BSS) offers the framework for projects relevant for the entire region, not just those countries covered by the Neighbourhood policy.

Romania is actively promoting, in close cooperation with the European Commission, a Regional partnership on environment for this region.

The initiative is in an advanced state of preparation and I am confident that it will be ready to be launched in 2-3 months' time. The support of the EU Presidency will, obviously, be essential for fulfilling this objective.

While the BSS can be the most appropriate vehicle for practical regional cooperation in environment protection, the EaP can work towards reaching EU standards in the partner states.

Another important source of inspiration could be the achievements within Danube Cooperation Initiative especially when considering the development of small and medium size enterprises, environmental protection, transport corridors interconnection, enhancing people-to-people relations through culture and tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although intriguing, I want to highlight here the contribution of key regional actors such as Russia or Turkey to the successful implementation of regional projects under Eastern Partnership.

Russia has always been an important player in the Eastern Europe as well as in the Black Sea region and there are many periods in which this has helped the region advance.

For instance, nobody doubts the need for an expanded market in Europe or for closer infrastructure links between East and West. There are also possible threats to energy security or to strategic infrastructures that we need to prevent in a coherent effort.

At the same time, the Black Sea region features an increasingly important actor on the global arena, Turkey. It is a vital country in

economic and strategic terms; it is the most important regional investor in the Black Sea area, and a G-20 member.

We are confident Turkey could be an important contributor to projects under the aegis of the Eastern partnership especially when talking about infrastructure, expanding trade, energy security and reaching countries from Southern Caucasus.

Nobody could deny geography. I will not deny history either. The platforms within Eastern Partnership project could be the appropriate answer to our long quest for engaging in constructive cooperation all partners interested in developing the region.

Eastern partnership also provides the opportunity to better connect interests in Europe and to reshape a common East-West agenda on energy security.

The severe gas disruption in Europe at the beginning of 2009 highlighted once again the importance of relying on multiple, suppliers and diversifying supply routes.

We acknowledge the legitimate interests of each EU member state to pursue its own external political agenda for ensuring the security of supplies, in relation to third countries. However we consider a must for the EU to speak with a single voice both in the negotiations and in engaging in energy projects with an EU impact.

As we recall, the European Council in March 2009 endorsed the initiative to develop the Southern Corridor in order to diversify gas supplies. This opens new means to capitalize on the openness of the Caspian countries towards energy cooperation with Europe – as confirmed on the occasions of the Budapest and Prague energy summits.

European support needs to be extended for upgrading energy infrastructure in the region, rehabilitating the energy grids, resolving

cross-regional ecological problems and devising a system of early warnings concerning potential cuts in supplies.

Convening a Regional Forum on Renewable Energy within Eastern partnership framework could be an important project on this respect.

We also acknowledge the critical need for boosting Ukraine's role as a reliable energy partner for Europe. We believe that the recent agreement on modernizing the Ukrainian energy infrastructure will positively complement European efforts to this end.

A strategic European project that needs to be properly considered in the Eastern Partnership framework will have to also ensure the technological upgrading of the electricity interconnections between Romania and Republic of Moldova.

This project will boost our neighbor's capacity to cope with energy shortages and to rely on EU effective support.

At regional level is important to maintain European cohesion on abiding the principles of the Energy Charter Treaty – an essential framework on relations with third countries.

Regarding the development of renewable energy capacities in the Region, the Swedish expertise will be an important asset in setting such projects, based on appropriate financial schemes and attracting proper EU funding. Organizing a regional Forum on renewable energy could represent a huge opportunity for the EU partners to promote their business.

We can also think about developing programmes on education. It is very well known that in a region so hit by rivalries, shaping up future elites, providing them with European approaches in various fields is urgently needed.

Investing in young people is always a most effective way to develop the strength to succeed, the ability to cope with the future and lead our countries forward.

I strongly believe the Eastern Partnership has to carve and fuel their abilities to join the leadership of their communities, to get the knowledge to build a successful business, and to experience a new sense of responsibility towards their people.

I also believe Eastern Partnership could prove instrumental in nourishing people's will to settle existing disputes in our Eastern Neighbourhood. A new culture of cooperation could be forged by each of the four platforms of the Partnership. Connecting people, bringing communities closer, investing in infrastructure, education and social welfare are remedies to the historical wounds.

The Transnistrian conflict is already a factor of primary concern for us and we constantly pointed out the danger of the protracted conflicts on the Eastern border of the EU.

We should also stimulate our own non-governmental organizations to get more involved in projects for the Eastern neighbourhood and enter into partnerships with NGOs. This will have an impact of scale in the process of civil society mobilisation for defending rule of law, democratic principles and liberties defining our European unity.

We also have to work closer with our partners in the region to enhance education opportunities, healthcare, to strengthen good governance and rule of law.

All these could become relevant tools in creating a new common cultural heritage for generations to come. Bridging dividing lines left behind by mentalities artificially created within the Eastern bloc will pave the way for a common European identity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The democratic development in the Eastern Neighbourhood needs clarity for facing strategic confusions based on geo-economic paradigm. The aim is not to invent a new strategic region but to combine genuine interests of the European community with the real needs people have in the Eastern Neighbourhood, the Black Sea and Caucasus area.

The Swedish presidency offers us a great opportunity to pull together resources, creativity and a new sense of solidarity in order to advance in our united Europe project.