Welcome Message

Andrzej Olechowski
Chairman of the Polish Group
European Deputy Chairman

On behalf of the Polish National Group, I wish you all a warm welcome at the 2004 plenary meeting of our Commission. Our conference is held in historic times. Europe is since a few days reunited within what becomes one of the most major endeavors since the end of World War II: the building of a truly free and united Europe. For my country, this is a momentous event, having suffered so severely over the past centuries.

In his first lecture on The Slavs professed at the Collège de France in Paris on 22 December 1840 by Poland’s greatest poet, at a time when my country did not exist on a map, Adam Mickiewicz underlined that “the desire to come together with the rest of Europe, to forge intimate links with the nations of the West is nowhere else so vivid, so wide-ranging as within the Slavic peoples.. We have at last reached the day of our coming-together.

Our conference programme will also—beyond Poland and larger European issues, Russia inclusive—address highly topical subjects in the diplomatic and economic fields of direct concern to our North American and Pacific Asian colleagues as well as to the broader international community including Israel and Palestine. Our conference proceedings will surely give us additional impetus to further and strengthen our trilateral links and propose new avenues to our Commission. What more fitting and symbolic country and city than to hear from our founding Director and inspirer, Zbigniew Brzezinski, on how the Trilateral Commission can best continue addressing the pressing challenges that in common we shall need to face at the beginning of this century.

One of the many challenges will be to “Renew the Atlantic Partnership.” As a member of this Task Force, it is a pleasure for me to distribute the recently released report by the Council on Foreign Relations which was co-chaired by two of our eminent Trilateral Commission colleagues, Dr. Henry Kissinger and Dr. Lawrence Summers. Quoting from this report, “The United States and its European allies do need to re-establish the habit of frequent, frank and timely consultation”: what better moment than to start today in Warsaw, including with our Asian friends and colleagues, as only together can we adjust to new geopolitical realities.