

I'm very glad that I can somehow contribute to the process, which I believe is important for my country, for my continent, for our community, for future of Europe and the world because I lived half of my life in totalitarian Czecho-Slovakia and half in free and now integrated Slovakia as European citizens. So it's totally different and I wish that next generations don't deal with these questions or problems but rather move ahead in responsible freedom. So, I took that for this conference in national colours of Albania to greet you all especially European movement of Albania also madame minister Gjonaj and friends from Slovak Foreign Policy Association. I was in Albania as commissioner I remember my tv debate with against Pollo then minister of education in the country meetings with governmental and other representatives and I hope that that I still can meet some of the friends there, and especially to build common future.

So, what to what to say in in relation to your process which is to start EU enlargement, is very important because it is about reunification of Europe actually. Short history of enlargements which success story because it started in 57 or in 1950 by the Schumann's declaration and Coal and Steel Community and then was growing and growing in exceeding countries were Denmark and Ireland, United Kingdom as well then in '81 it was Greece, '86 Spain and Portugal, '95 in central Europe Austria, and then Finland and Sweden. And then historical enlargement so-called historical because it was post-cold war and the largest in numbers of countries and number of population was inviting three baltic states poland hungary Slovakia czech republic slovenia malta and cyprus and then from your part of the of the world from western balkans first country after slovenia was croatia joining the Union seven years ago and then you have also a new phenomenon the first country which left recently European Union united kingdom i will not comment too much from all these but European Union is the answer to the crisis of the times whether we mean post-cold war situation or even post-war situation we should learn from the critical times and adapt and do something creative lasting and constructive enlargement of the Union means actually Europeanization of the Union so with those new members now collectively 27 Union of original six is more European is more complete but vice versa it also means the Europeanization of our countries so western balkans needs to Europeanize to be again closer part of the of the continental community and there are two major reasons which remain important for this process first one is peace peace itself and peace is

always fruit of justice and therefore is good when you discuss chapter 23 and then 24 and the whole process which is so important on principles like rule of law stability of democratic institutions fight against corruption protection of human rights including national minority unaccomplished because first world war started over 100 years ago in balkans and we need to get back after a century after second world war which was kind of revenge after the first one then there was cold war and we need to get back to balkans with peace so this mission is unaccomplished and need to be pursued and second reason is also very timely it's globalization because isolated divided we cannot withhold the pressures from the world and on the other side we need to form the the global processes which are so important in many aspects in security in migration policy in in defense let's say but also in trade and other areas European Union is quoted and frequently represented by Union of values so which values are important if we should stay united in the charter of fundamental human rights or better to say in the treaty lisbon treaty the valid last treaty you can find four basic fundamental values dignity human dignity freedom equality solidarity so these values are important for us individually on the national base but of course also on on a community base so eu itself is a political innovation this was this is unprecedented sui generis community it's not a super state because member states actually now 27 member states are lords of the European Union and nothing in the treaties has changed until all countries agree no budget is approved until all countries agree and no enlargement is possible until all in consensus agree so member states remain lords of the Union and Union is in a way servant or serving to the interests and common values of member states and um enlargement i must say as former as you said chief negotiator and even commissioner is the most successful European Union policy in 20 years and we need successful policy so we need to continue in this form and and regain momentum so western balkans is now important part of the answer my second dimension or contribution today is about how the enlargement was going on and will go on because it was defined on so-called copenhagen criteria after cold war in 1993 which speaks about political economic administrative commitments or or conditions for accession it means political stability of the institutions for democracy for rule of law as i said human rights protection protection national minorities economic criteria which means functioning market economy capable to which withheld or counter competitive pressures because it's not easy to to run competition on a large European market which is quite competitive you must know then there are commitments to take over aki community everything what was what is already in place within the Union must become reality in Albania but also common objectives of the Union in future or for future these criteria which are quite clear have

been then also combined by so-called Madrid criterion Spanish capital saying that country needs to prepare to have in place administrative capacities which means people people who are skilled professional professionally prepared for for making European agenda real in the country then after enlargement 2007 benchmarking came in place in enlargement process and now member states speak about so-called enlargement toolkit there was also always some sort of adaptation because Union is moving target you are targeting the membership but in in time it's changing it doesn't mean additional problems but rather a living community might about Slovakia Slovakia on on this road because maybe that's the most important message from my side to you how to learn how to share how to get inspiration or better better knowledge about your decisions your policies principles in the in the process remain they are practically the same but details [Music] context context is changing because European Union is moving Slovakia entered the negotiations it was precisely in 2000 with a two-year delay in negotiations this is maybe important message because this is also the case in in western balkans now but we had years at least four years of political instability which means mistrust within the European institutions after these years of deficits democratic deficits or or breaches of the constitution but then after really very productive constructive policies Slovakia became quoted candidate and then later you remember as a tatra tiger or central European example of catching up and integration i must tell you that European integration is rewarding to those who are prepared those who are active who are mature and that's why Albania should use the time properly for preparation for activation of the whole potential and for its European i would say maturity so what was the strategy of Slovakia i i think in two words it was realistic and ambitious because what we stated as our content and time targets became reality and it was ambitious in terms of catching up and joining Union together with the whole region with neighbors namely czech republic poland hungary what was important in the strategy and during those years of negotiations that political consensus and public support were kept very high up to 80 percent in public opinion never under 60 and till the end we we kept this till the end which was actually the beginning of membership this high level of consensus it was never used for domestic political nitty-gritty you know relations or or irresponsible policies strategy was to prepare countries sooner than to see European Union of then 15 being prepared we understood European Union policies and anarchy community as domestic interests and the answers to the modernization needs so instead of seeking something for our deficits and problems we we took European answers European aqui como montero European experiences as the answers for domestic homeworks domestic reforms then very important message for Albania and our

region integration always starts at home it's not about brussels or you know some other place in Europe it is about home which must become compatible somehow comparable part of larger community second is regional dimension or neighborly relations because you cannot be good friends with Europeans if you are not good friends with neighbors and this is special contribution of each country in the neighborhood in the region of western balkans we need that contribution from you and we cannot replace anybody in this responsibility and then comes this continental togetherness that we should be and in a way we hope to be good friends in brussels in our common institutions and then comes also global interdependence where the European Union plays a role in global institutions so on more concrete examples in time of our beginning when negotiations were to start we set our accession target or integration date as january 1st 2004 it was set in 1999 so like five years in the process and at that time um hungary had the objective of accession 2002 in poland and czech republic 2003 so in a way we believed that it will not be sooner rather a bit late but in any case we need to prepare and secondly the best modality was to join with the neighbors in order to preserve what we achieved with the czechs it was customs Union czechoslovakia customs Union and then to build feng and together not in complicated puzzle but together one region with one external border which happened then in december 2007 so that's why i say it was realistic it was ambitious quite speedy process actually but also realistic and became part of history now then Slovakia continued it was not self-satisfaction or you know a pause rather further work and hard work in order to join eurozone and we joined in 2008 and then formally started 2009 to use European currency instead of slovak corona or crown and this is really fruit of lasting continuous constructive homeworks reforms in principle we did not negotiate or demand derogations because we didn't want different Union in Slovakia but very compatible and true European Union but we focused on important and necessary transitional periods in slovak legislation or economy and other policies in terms of overall content we didn't ask too much in order to get less or medium but we try to persuade partners on the other side of the table to get what is proper because you know there are mutual sensitivities on our side it was land ownership or purchasing state aid policy in previous years to special companies or investors free movement of capital on the other side for the European Union it was free movement of labor cheap labor from Slovakia or other countries nuclear power plants which were using older soviet technology and so on so we have to understand that there are sensitivities on two sides and with constructive way and reasonable compromises adaptations we can find either transitional measures or solutions for these sensitivities so i encourage you to stay

very factual and not emotional in this process because only such attitude is a winning one and never play discarded we are good boys Albanians and there are bad boys from brussels no that's that's never the reality it's either a mixture or simply we are at the two sides of one common European table and we need to find a common solution common ground common wars of course as i mentioned common values and then common future and it will be common victory these are not empty words these are important principles Albania must cooperate very closely with incoming presidencies with European parliament and especially with commission and member states 27 member states these are important partners commission for example was an ally it was honest broker between candidates on one side and of course members who will at the end decide about enlargement last not least trust matter most you may speak a lot about details about about budgetary implications financial issues but trust which you cannot measure in in money or in kilograms is the decisive for future of Albania future of European Union in western balkans then it is not only issue for chief negotiator or a few ministers you need to set very clear and strong and responsible structures especially in the government which means each ministry must become more European with special departments with a concrete agenda parliament needs not only European integration committee and association joint committee but also clear consensus between coalition and opposition that this is a common objective and there cannot be secrets on the road ahead there must be internal trust president must be involved very officially very efficiently in this process you need to set the system of consultations ongoing regular transparent consultations with businesses civil society academia schools research then maybe shortly on negotiation chapters we had then 31. now it's a different number but the principle is the same and we set [Music] as i said not derogations but transitional periods or special requests which were the most sensitive issues in our in our chapters the most complicated complex difficult or long negotiations were in chapters energy policy environment for example for example taxation transport justice and homophones agriculture in both parts which means direct payments and fito sanitary and veterinary measures for freedoms freedom of goods services labor and capital competition or stay date and our transitional periods in order to protect sensitivities or or problematic areas which needed more time to adapt for example in area of free movement of capital ten years it was about land protection labor movement from the side of eu 15 it was seven years transitional arrangement 11 years in environment the longest transitional period taxation five so as chief negotiator i was heading teams and and all leaders of individual chapters and communicating a lot with the whole public parliament government and also logically with member states we focused on rapid opening and

dynamism in process based on well done and timely homework so being prepared and then push for rapid opening and dynamism in the process process as i said was realistic in time and content because we achieved all requests and our time schedule became European at the end because enlargement came in 2004 not in january as we said but may 1st which was the best answer because we were ready when eu became ready and set the date for may 1st to to enlarge by 10 countries it is important my friends not to raise too high expectations but rather determination of Albanians of population of political parties because to raise extra expectations is easy but detrimental or even dangerous sometimes remember that nothing nothing is closed until everything is closed so in the first year we open half of chapters then in the second year we open the remaining or the second half of chapters and closed quite a lot in the first 10 years 10 chapters and in the second year 12 we got after two years on the level of the cigarette group and then after three years we closed all chapters and the whole process after 34 months so actually almost three years and it was done our neighbors did the same process in five years remember it's important to consult with candidates as well not only with member states to prepare to adapt to build trust European Union then changed from regatta model from convoy model to regatta which means everybody could move on its own merits by its own speed and that's also important today that that candidates do not block each other or slow down the whole process conditions now in many ways are comparable still some has changed because of sensitivities or the whole set of relations but remember this is another point public support is decisive it's important to get involved media self-governments whether municipal or regional non-governmental organizations associations even religious communities Albania will belong to where its people will decide to belong to Slovakia was the same we have decided whether to join west or the east or be a a black hole to belong no nowhere