

Address by Gabrielius Landsbergis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania at the Forum “Lublin Four: Networks, Opportunities and Challenges”

6 October 2023 10:00

Vilnius Town Hall

Dear participants and guests of the Forum,

I warmly welcome you to Vilnius, a city that celebrates its 700th anniversary this year, a city where Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and many other peoples have lived together for centuries, a city where the spirit of freedom has always prevailed.

Today, the need for collaboration and unity between our peoples is particularly strong. We know very well why.

Ukraine is at war, defending its country and the democratic values of the world against a regime that has lost all traces of empathy for human life and suffering.

Thousands of Belarusians are facing cruel repression simply because they dared to express their free will and peacefully demand change.

Lithuania, Poland, and other democratic countries have given shelter to hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and Belarusians fleeing war and persecution. As it has been for centuries, Vilnius is once again a haven for those who value freedom and democracy.

However, free people must live not only in Vilnius, but also in Vitebsk, Lviv, Kherson or Brest - where they were born and grew up. That is the goal, and there is only one way to achieve it. That way is the total victory of Ukraine.

The challenges of authoritarian aggression, whether from the Kremlin or the Lukashenko regime, cannot be appeased by concessions or temporary ceasefires. Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians know this, unfortunately, very well.

The road to that victory depends on many factors, not all of which are within our control. So, we must make the most of those that are within our control.

The ideas, arguments and loud voices of intellectuals, public figures, journalists and religious leaders in all corners of the Lublin triangle - indeed, square - are essential to building and maintaining the political will to support Ukraine till the total victory. They are also necessary to free Belarus from the shackles of the current regime.

Big things start small. Only a united front and a loud voice from the region can make Europe and the wider democratic world hear and listen to our arguments.

United we stand, divided we fall. A saying not as old as Vilnius, but inescapably true. Today we must stand united.

I wish you a fruitful debate and great ideas.

Slava Ukraini!