



**CULTURAL CORRIDORS OF SOUTH EAST EUROPE
COMMON PAST AND SHARED HERITAGE -
A KEY TO FUTURE PARTNERSHIP
A REGIONAL FORUM**

Varna, May 20-21 2005

**ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. ALFRED MOISIU,
PRESIDENT OF ALBANIA**

(Summarized, the original text is not available)

- The President thanked for the initiative of President Parvanov and for the assistance of the international organizations, incl. UNESCO, and marked that the forum in Varna was part of the efforts to intensify the political dialogue, incl. the dialogue, which concerned an important part of the reality, namely the cultural dialogue;
- Reminded, that at the Forum in Ohrid, the Heads of State from the region had stressed on the dialogue between civilizations, last year in Tirana, they had put an accent on the ethnical and inter-religious dialogue, and today's discussion on cultural corridors is a base for the development of the cultural relations;
- Noted, that three years ago, it had been extremely difficult for someone to imagine that the presidents from the entire region would come together, the way they have gathered today, that this exactly was the most valuable thing about this meeting and obviously it would contribute a lot to the cooperation through the unification around the common values, inherited from different nations in South East Europe. He added that this was a new direction for the future work and a proof for the attention, paid to these important problems and issues;
- Highly estimated the role of the Council of Europe and especially the interest, shown by this organization to South East Europe, which was among the most important cradles of civilization;
- In this regard, he insisted on working for integration in the political, social and military area, and especially distinguished the cultural integration, which meant cultural interaction, but every nation kept its cultural identity. He added, that in order to achieve this, it was necessary that the cultural heritage was developed, preserved and presented in the best possible way.
- Reminded that the region lied on the crossroad of great civilizations – the Greek, the Roman, the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian and the culture had resisted the rising and falling tides of these empires;
- Stated that meanwhile, peoples from the region had offered a lot to the civilizations, which had passed through these territories and this was clearly seen, the way it was seen that the separate cultures had their specifics, but also a lot of common things. He added, that the world was living in a period of globalization and this moment was especially important today;

- Agreed with the statement that temporary conflicts are not conflicts between the civilizations and pointed as an example an icon from the 19th century in Albania, on which, a holy water spring was drawn and in the background, the minarets of a mosque were seen. This shows that tolerance and cultural exchange is something, that has always existed, but it is Heads of State' obligation to reveal such phenomena and to encourage them in future;
- Thanked to the organizers of the forum, because this was a great contribution to understanding of the problems of the region's common heritage, which was a support for the Balkans, and especially to make them peaceful and turn them in a place of mutual agreement;
- Called on all countries to intensify their participation and to involve other countries, which were not there that day – for example Kosovo, because there was also a specific cultural and historical heritage. Expressed his hope that this meeting would help such a development.