

**Keynote address by Mr. Mitja Gaspari,  
Governor of Banka Slovenije  
at the €Conference Slovenia 2007**

*Ljubljana, 15 January 2007*

Honoured guests: President of the European Central Bank Mr Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the Eurogroup Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Mr Joaquín Almunia, Minister of Finance Mr Andrej Bajuk, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The author of the culturological, anthropological and economic study *The Century*, **Alain Badiou**, begins his famous book with the following questions: "A century, how many years is that? What are a hundred years, what are a thousand years if they are erased by a single moment? Shall we ask ourselves, then, what is the extraordinary moment that erases the 20<sup>th</sup> century? The fall of the Berlin Wall? The decoding of the genome sequence? The introduction of the euro? But even supposing that we succeed in constructing a century, in constituting it as an object for thought... is not a century above all a historical unit?"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that we understand the introduction of the euro as a historic challenge and also as an opportunity. An opportunity that underlines the ability of our country to develop into a stable economic and financial environment. An opportunity for it to improve possibilities for even faster development and to reach the level of the most developed members of the Eurozone.

The foundations for creating such a future were laid by the historic decisions taken fifteen years ago, decisions on what we Slovenes wish to be and where we wish to arrive. Our own money and a stable currency were the symbol and guarantee of such decisions. The tolar

was not simply money for us, but through its solidity it proved that we are also capable of putting these historic decisions into effect. We proved that we were able to realise them for the well-being of the majority.

But whether, and how, we will succeed in further developing all that we have achieved in past years does not depend on the euro, but on us ourselves. Many important questions and dilemmas await us. And as part of the family of European nations, we will have to seek answers to them in such a way that the decisions adopted will bind us together rather than separate us.

**The transition from the tolar to the euro is therefore a historic transition and a transition of the historic**, which means part of the symbolic completion and conclusion of a value system, a lengthy and complex process in which are ranged the criteria of genuine Slovene uniqueness within the horizons of the European identity. For this reason the mere act and creation of the transition from the tolar to the euro can be linked to images of the Slovene European, historically based on paradigms of culture and the artistic struggles in it. And in so far as every identity is based on difference, and contains it as an internal factor and internal condition, so much the more can we celebrate the criteria of differences that enable the coexistence of plural forms, tolerances, codes and strategies of life in an age following the postmodern era, in the age of the new century and millennium. The coexistence of the uniform in the different and of the different in the uniform brings and opens up new possibilities of perception and a refinement of the questions that through the brilliant poetic language of the greatest Slovene poet and author of Slovenia's national anthem, France Prešeren, are set in the mental architecture of the European Union: "God's blessing on all nations who long and work for that bright day when o'er earth's habitations no war, no strife shall hold its sway...'

Slovenia's plebiscite and Slovenia's achievement of independence were the highest expression of this dream and this longing – and became the fundamental factors of autonomy and sovereignty.

Slovenia's currency, the tolar, played the extremely important role of an emblem of stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today the euro is Slovenia's currency, a European currency that links together more than 300 million people and that has become a powerful, stable world currency... And just as Experience teaches us that 'the history of phenomena is infinitely great, but the history of images that survive is infinitely small,' so we are proud that the concepts, categories, ethnographic records, and great figures of Slovene culture are depicted on the currency of eternity – on the euro as the most powerful symbol in the difference of a united Europe – as a memory of reason and courage, of meeting, constituting and creating, of images of Slovene identity in coexistence and interconnection with other European cultures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I take this opportunity to wish you a pleasant stay in Ljubljana and a successful continuation of the conference.