



Speech by Lilyana Pavlova, Minister for the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, at the Opening ceremony of the Bulgarian Presidency

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,

Dear guests!

Welcome to this temple of performing art – the National Theatre Ivan Vazov!

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to the official opening of the first Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU!

For us, Bulgarians, the accession to the EU 11 years ago was a dream come true.

Today, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to all who have worked hard throughout the years and until this day, for us to arrive at this historical moment in time.

We take the responsibility to chair the Council of the EU with pride and confidence.

We believe in a better tomorrow and we have the will, energy and determination to work for it together with all of you

Bulgaria has a lot to contribute to Europe – from our rich culture, history, nature, traditions, folklore, art... to innovations, technologies, the knowledge and talent of Bulgarians

Our millennia-old culture brings together the best from all civilizations on our land. Our history has taught us to be tolerant, to seek a dialogue and to be hospitable.

That is how we have preserved ourselves for more than 13 centuries. This is also how the European Union will continue to exist and prosper – not divided in big and small, rich and poor, East and West, but United in what brings us together.

We are ready to face and overcome the challenges ahead of us.



This is why we believe, more than ever, in the Bulgarian Presidency's motto –

United We Stand Strong!