



## Speech by Boyko Borissov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, at the Opening ceremony of the Bulgarian Presidency

Please allow me to address first His Holiness, our Patriarch and ask for his blessing, as written in the Bible – without God we cannot achieve anything.

Dear President Radev,

Dear President Tajani,

Dear Mrs. Karayancheva,

Dear Donald,

Dear Jean-Claude

Commissioners, Members of Parliament, Ambassadors, Members of the Constitutional Court and all, so I do not miss mentioning anybody.

I think that after the speech given by our friend Donald Tusk any speech or discourse would be inappropriate. Because he himself said – and I thought he was joking, “Every day I learn a sentence in Bulgarian to be able to deliver my speech in Bulgarian”. At first I didn’t believe that he learnt English in just a few months, to become the President of the Council, but now when he speaks Bulgarian so well too... I believe that we as Bulgarians should appreciate that the President of the Council put so much effort into showing, before all the European institutions, his respect to our history, our people, to all of you who have worked so hard.

The fact that we are together here today – the President, the Vice-President, leaders of Parliamentary groups speaks for itself. We have six months to make efforts not only for Bulgaria, because – yes, on one hand, we have to be an impartial moderator in the debate, but at the

same time we have to do so that every Bulgarian has the feeling that the European Union is doing something for them too.

I had talks for a couple of hours today with the big European media and with Donald Tusk. The concern, expressed in the questions, the concern of all, is enormous. For these 6 months there will be many events starting, others continuing, and others yet will be finalized.

The Cohesion Policy: There will be 10 billion Euro less in the European budget. Very big problems in the region. In Crimea issues are not being solved. Our big neighbours... As the President said, we must work hard. Even countries like Slovenia and Croatia, today the media asked me about the conflict there, Article 7 for Poland – when and how it will start, we have to resolve the relations between the Commission and Poland in time.

The Western Balkans – what we spoke of and actually have the opportunity to put forward, the hope of Western Balkans peoples, the agricultural policy, cybersecurity, PESCO – the Common European Defence. I don't know what to put first – the migration flow or solving the migration crisis which continues to divide the Union. And all this in the six months of our Presidency. We must ask many questions and give many answers.

I would like to take the opportunity – and with the Chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz today we agreed to work with the Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament so that the two Presidencies in 2018 of Bulgaria and Austria go with maximum continuity on the topics we start.

I will stop here because, I repeat, let us enjoy once again this extraordinary – I have never felt like that about a speech like Donald Tusk's in my life – I have never felt so pleasantly surprised and I wouldn't like us to stray away from it.



May our Presidency be successful and let us do something for Bulgaria and for Europe with the modest possibilities we have.

Once again welcome you all. And I wish everyone a successful Presidency!