

Toast of His Excellency President
of the Republic of Latvia
Mr Egils Levits
at the state dinner
in honour of the State Visit of
His Royal Highness
The Grand Duke of Luxembourg
to the Republic of Latvia

Riga, 13 March 2023

Your Royal Highness!

Distinguished Luxembourg delegation!

Dear guests!

It is a great pleasure to welcome you on your first visit to Latvia! Your visit to Latvia is a symbolic event in the history of our countries' diplomatic relations, which spans over a hundred years, as it is the first visit of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg since the establishment of relations between our countries.

Your visit is a testament to the close and friendly relationship between our countries, which is invaluable in the troubled times we live in today. Territorially small countries, such as Latvia and Luxembourg, must stick together to stand up for the international order and resist the attempts of aggressor countries to change it arbitrarily.

Luxembourg recognized the state of Latvia on 4 October 1922. We are grateful that Luxembourg never officially recognized the annexation of the

Baltic states as part of the Soviet Union, neither de iure nor de facto.

In this geopolitically difficult time, we again appreciate Luxembourg's firm stance and support for the international order, rule of law, regional security and other values that are the basis of democratic societies.

Therefore, I especially appreciate the opportunity today to exchange opinions on current issues of regional security, the European Union and global politics, and to discuss closer cooperation between Latvia and Luxembourg. Fortunately, due to the alphabetical order, Latvia and Luxembourg sit shoulder to shoulder in the EU Council, where in 2015 we were both presiding countries.

It is worth remembering that our great freedom of movement, which is highly valued by the people of Latvia, was born in the town of Schengen in Luxembourg. We must do everything to protect this

freedom and make best use of the Schengen Agreement.

I would also like to emphasize the growing economic cooperation between Latvia and Luxembourg. Luxembourg is already one of the ten largest investors in Latvia. At the same time, it is in the interest of our two countries to continue promoting cooperation in the field of digital and green technologies. Latvia is also interested in cooperation with Luxembourg in the field of space technology. I am sure that your visit and the Latvia-Luxembourg business seminar planned for tomorrow on the topic of digitization and sustainability will promote even more active connections between our entrepreneurs.

Latvia and Luxembourg are also linked by cultural and educational ties. Latvian classical music artists often give concerts in Luxembourg, and films by Latvian directors are regularly shown. The contacts of our people are also of great value. The Latvian diaspora of Luxembourg is one of the most active

communities in the cultural and social life of Luxembourg. Luxembourg is like a second home also to me, because I lived there with my family for many years while I was a judge of the European Court of Justice.

Your Royal Highness, dear guests!

Last year, celebrating the centenary of diplomatic relations between our countries, Latvia and Luxembourg gave each other rose seedlings specially selected in our countries, which are now growing in the botanical gardens of Latvia and Luxembourg.

May these rose bushes grow for the next hundred years as a symbol of the strength and longevity of our friendly relations!