



LATVIJAS VALSTS PREZIDENTS

**Speech of H.E. President of Latvia Raimonds Vējonis
at the festive gathering to mark the centenary of Scouting in Latvia
7 April 2017**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

The movement of Scouts and Guides in Latvia and its fate vividly reflect the history of Latvia in the 20th century. In parallel to our country, scouting has developed throughout the century teaching patriotism among Latvian young people. Although foreign powers trampled and despised it, scouting has always retained the aspiration upwards, to the light, and to freedom. Despite the darkness, being cast out from home, the love of the fatherland and the spirit of human values revived in exile and now are flourishing once again in the sections of Scouts and Guides of Latvia throughout Latvia and in the communities of our compatriots around the world.

Dear young people, did you know that the father of Scouts, British Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell was the Commander of the Grand Cross of the Order of Three Stars, the highest state award of Latvia? Have you heard that the first Commander of the Latvian Army Oskars Kalpaks was a godfather of the son of the President of Latvian Scouts, General Karlis Goppers? There are many pages of heroism and self-denial in the history of Scouting in Latvia just like in the history of our country, which should be studied and identified. Knowing one's origins and history, both a state as a whole and each resident can look more confidently at the future and work in favour of the country and its people.

During the Boer War, Robert Baden-Powell entrusted young people, who did not participate in warfare directly, to be messengers. In that way, he both employed the youngsters usefully during sometimes-boring siege routine, trained them physically and taught responsibility and sense of duty at the same time.

That starting point is rather symbolic for entire Scouting movement, because young people become messengers of patriotism towards their fatherland and heralds, who purposefully develop their skills and gain confidence that anyone of us can be and is necessary for our country. In our everyday lives, we can do larger and smaller deeds for Latvia, and they are of equal importance.

Nowadays, the movement of Scouts and Guides can develop and grow freely in independent Latvia. The values inspiring Scouts and Guides are the same as found in the deepest core of the Latvia's people, that is, endurance, responsibility, dignity, and enterprise. They also strengthen us and help us be prepared for future challenges, which will definitely come.

Alongside the centenary of the Scouting in Latvia, we are also approaching the centenary of the Republic of Latvia. May the ideals of our national freedom and independence always live in the hearts of Scouts and Guides! May they always inspire you for new deeds! I congratulate the Scouts and Guides of Latvia all over the world on the occasion of the centenary of their organisation!

Dear Scouts and Guides, Latvia needs you. Be alert!