



LATVIJAS VALSTS PREZIDENTS

**Speech of President of Latvia Raimonds Vējonis
at the Riga StratCom Dialogue 2017
on 5 July 2017**

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my honor to welcome you to the Riga StratCom Dialogue 2017. I am glad that the conference has brought together a remarkable spectrum of policy-makers, communications experts and academics.

In the past three years, we have witnessed great geopolitical changes. To the East we are facing the disinformation and propaganda activities of Russia. They aim to sway public opinion and influence decision making across the transatlantic community. To the South we have encountered an intensive Da'esh information campaign to radicalize vulnerable groups, recruit new terrorist fighters and plant fear in our minds.

We have chosen not to engage in counter-propaganda. We have decided to safeguard the features that distinguish democratic communities from others. Together, we agreed to build our resilience, invest in media professionalism, to strengthen critical thinking in our societies and to deconstruct lies. We chose the truth and that is why we are here today.

In only a few years we have made significant progress. NATO's StratCom Center of Excellence in Riga is one of the best examples of our commitment to confront propaganda and disinformation from the south and from the east.

The EU's EAST StratCom Task Force is an invaluable tool, revealing Russian disinformation and strengthening the resilience of our partners.

The Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, established by journalists in 2015, strengthens independent quality journalism and media literacy in the Baltic States and the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The recently opened European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki is an example of EU and NATO cooperation.

But there is still a lot to do and learn. I believe that one of our priorities should be deepened cooperation between NATO and the EU in strategic communication. This is especially important in the context of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland. We have already seen targeted disinformation campaigns aimed at the participating nations. These actions should not be allowed to hide behind the democratic freedoms of speech and of the press.

Together with like-minded countries we are working to adapt media regulation to the challenges of our age - both here, in Latvia, and at the EU level. These range from cross-border broadcasting and misusing the lack of coordination between Member States to the lack of transparency of media ownership. Responsible, truthful, objective and transparent media is a key feature of a democratic society.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am confident that our efforts will prevail and outlive the era of "post-truth" and "fake news". We have understood the threat, raised awareness and, most important, we are now working on the solution.

To conclude, I would like to thank the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence and the Latvian National Library for hosting this event. I wish you fruitful discussions and hope that they will serve as an opportunity to strengthen our ties, cooperation and communication.

I would like to conclude with the words of Buddha: "There are three things that cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth".