

Good morning, or Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Dear participants,

Let me greet all of you and pay tribute to organizers of this valuable and very important event. Not only for Croatia... for Europe and the world

I wish I could be with you today in our beautiful, for 34 years independent Croatia. But, these are busy weeks here in Kiev and my life is marked by alarms. This night we already spent 4 hours in the shelter. Another alarm has just started, the third today.

Thank you for the invitation, dear dr. Čivljak. I wish every success to your conference

My attitude as a catholic believer towards the Homeland War and the war in the UA

What I remember the best from the Homeland war now is the fear for lives of family members and friends who joined the army. We were praying a lot, especially in front of the Corpus Christi – the Blessed Sacrament. We prayed rosaries and would often fall asleep during the prayer as the war is an extremely exhausting period of your life – emotionally, psychologically and physically. You do not stop thinking and worrying for those who are in the front-line; you are addicted to information spread through the radio or TV, almost every day you hear about the loss of lives. Not to speak about the tragedy of those who had to flee their destroyed homes. Unfortunately, I dare to say, you can just imagine what will be in the aftermath but I can say that even in the worst-case scenario there is a hope that everything should not be so dark. This hope, I find it now, was the nucleus permitted that the life never goes out.

Many years have passed since the Homeland war ended. And here we go! I found myself in another unjust and destructive situation called the war! So similar to what I already went through! But I am not the same person anymore. My role and my responsibility are far away from the young and innocent girl I was! As a young person who felt very clearly all the injustice of the enemy's actions and who truly hoped and sincerely believed that there must be someone more capable, stronger and more powerful to stop this injustice that threatened to destroy us. And that did not happen!

Meanwhile, I grew up. Not only did I add years. I matured through life situations that were very sad, but looking back they were so necessary in order to better understand the situation I am in now, and to react in the most correct way by representing my country as a diplomat. To take care primarily of others, rearrange priorities, replace diplomacy with humanity. I can't say I was prepared for that. Not at all! But now comes the other part of my life – maturity in faith. I acquired it over the years, strengthened by the already mentioned sad events - today some would mistakenly call them tragedies. In those years of maturation in faith, my trust in God, in God's presence, in Providence has increased. And especially in the knowledge of how immeasurable the prayers of others are important for me. Surrounded by the prayers of many, I remained calm, composed and extremely efficient. When someone would ask me: “What do you need?” - thinking of sending money or food... I always answered: prayers are needed the most. My testimony is that I took many decisions I had to, without being aware of their range. And at the end it was the exact thing what was needed to do!

What a blessing that was! I have never been afraid, as so many prayers on my intention went to the God.

Another detail... When I travel in Ukraine, which is not harmless - the statue of Our Lady of Fatima travels with me. I called her: Mother of God from the journey!

The famous Croatian missionary, Jesuit of holy life, Father Ante Gabrić, often repeated: there is nothing that cannot be achieved through fasting and prayer. Believe, that is so true!!! I experienced it myself.

The trust in God means that we believe that He is running this world - despite of everyone who thinks they are!

This is where the battle between Good and Evil takes place.

And I firmly believe that my life is in God's hands and that I will end it at the time and in the way that He has determined long ago.

Main challenges we are facing during the times of war – the role of diplomacy before the war starts, during and after the war

Beyond any doubt, we live in a very turbulent world. People seem to be able to ignite only the sparks of war, not to bring peace. This is a crushing truth from which there is, for sure, a way out.

Many are pinning their hopes on diplomacy. To those who know how to talk and negotiate in gloves. Those who know how to win over and do everything to make it a win-win situation, so that no one feels like a loser, so that everyone's face is saved.

Are diplomats really capable of bringing peace? They are, but only to a certain degree and within certain frameworks. As soon as tensions build up, diplomacy comes into play. Efforts to calm the situation are multiplying, efforts to please both sides to find a solution, which we call a compromise. Special envoys are sent, telephone conversations are organized at the highest level, messages are exchanged, diplomacy is involved to the greatest extent possible. And the war still happens.... Does that mean we went the wrong way? Maybe we were just going after people the only way possible...

It is extremely difficult to be a man of peace. Because man is not capable of bringing peace. It is only God who brings just and lasting peace. And for that peace it is necessary to follow the path of truth. One, only and not perverted truths.

And when war breaks out, usually diplomacy falls silent. The services of diplomats in the classical sense are no longer needed. Their 'rounded style' has no place anymore. They are pushed aside and become silent, just like the Muses from that proverb: Inter arma Muse silent.

However, they then find their place in facilitating human destinies - either their own citizens or those of others. And that's not a little!

In every war, villages and cities are destroyed, but the most difficult thing is that human lives are lost. Because they are irreplaceable. Just like broken families, destroyed childhoods...

Aware of all this, the need for diplomacy and negotiations soon arises again, a compromise is sought in order to stop the killing and destruction.

Seeking peace is a very natural aspiration; it can never be a weakness. On the contrary, it requires strength, wisdom and great, almost supernatural patience. And only God can mediate in that.

Once peace is established, life, although significantly altered, returns to normal. Nothing is the same anymore, and it cannot be. But diplomacy takes its place again: observer, negotiator, and even adviser.

It seems to me that we live in a time that very clearly follows the proverb: *Si vis pacem para bellum*. The goal is to intimidate the enemy with stronger and more powerful weapons. But such an approach cannot bring peace. If we have adopted this principle, we should definitely strive for negotiations in parallel, in order to reduce the devastating effects of war and shorten the time of mutual destruction.

Positive effects of the war

Staying here in Ukraine, I realized that war can also have positive effects. It is so visible here!

The onslaught of the enemy homogenized the Ukrainians as a nation. Until then, perhaps without a clear identity, many became aware of their nation. And his language. And its poets and writers. And his melodies. And traditions...

But what seems most important to me: this people do not hate! The enemy killed many people of this nation, but did not capture their soul! They look to the future, which they see as European! Despite the sacrifices, or perhaps because of them, they want to shake off the dust of war and, at least as they see it, a happier future for themselves and their children.

What kind of assistance are we able to provide the population with?

The help to be provided can take a myriad of forms. One type of aid includes financial, economic, military, political, humanitarian... It is abundantly provided by states. But, speaking from personal experience, the most important is the one that is also the most demanding - support **through proximity**. Staying with and literally sharing the fate of those in need. I've experienced it, there's no better help than that. The very feeling of not being abandoned is often more important than the feeling of satiety.

It goes without saying for everyone who is willing to help. There are many demands from Ukrainian side for assistance. And In different ways. One of them, they desperately need is the assistance in resocialisation of war veterans. They know about heroic victory in Homeland war due to our heroes. They are facing the same challenge now and need someone's assistance.

Why not to share Croatian experience with our Ukrainian friends?

THANK YOU!