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THE POWER OF THE FUTURE

9–10 September 2011, Bled, Slovenia

The 6th Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) entitled “The Power of the Future” took place at Bled, Slovenia on 9 and 10 September. In two days the conference hosted 9 panels and 2 round tables of Young BSF. Over 350 participants from all over the world attended the conference, including Foreign Ministers of Chile, Liechtenstein, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, Russian Minister of Telecommunications and Mass Communications, Mr Igor Shchegolev, Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Fu Jing, and several other Vice-Ministers and States Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, Director General of WIPO, Dr Francis Gury, Secretary General of CoE, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, and many others.

Young BSF has been a novelty of this year’s conference and consisted of two round tables, the first dedicated to the view of youth on future of the Western Balkans (Round Table A: The Western Balkans in 2020 – In the Eyes of Twenty-Year-Olds) and the second to the power shifts and future of power (Round Table B: The Power of the Future). Both round tables concluded that future needs more cooperation, understanding and dialogue on all levels of societies to bring positive developments.

Main Panel (The Power of the Future) addressed the transition of power. It highlighted the increasing influence of non-state actors and online social networks, fear of necessary changes, and enduring stereotypes as some of the main global challenges.

Special Panel (Search for a New “World Order” in the Mediterranean) was dedicated to recent changes in southern Mediterranean. It concluded that win-win approach to cooperation between the region and the western world is as vital for securing stable and democratic results.

Night Owl Session (The Power of Innovation) concluded the first day of the Forum. Panellists agreed that Europe needs to be more innovative and in order to secure that it needs to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and improve its education system. Innovation is the only way for Europe to catch up with fast growing countries and successfully overcome the crisis.

Key message from Panel A (The EU and China: Strategic partners and Competitors) is the need for greater trust in EU-China relations as there are deep distrust and the persistent fear of the "Chinese threat" in Europe in them.

Panel B (The Power of Smaller States in Global Affairs) reaffirmed important role of smaller states in international arena. For their visibility and success The panellists agreed that setting the right priority fields where they can excel is as a key strategy for small countries to make their way in the international arena. Interested in the common good, small countries can also be a bridge between the diverging views of others.

Panel C (Restoring Afghanistan) stressed when Western power launched a campaign to bring down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan ten years ago, it rekindled hope a country which had lived with war for 20 years. This hope is now almost extinguished, mainly due to great uncertainty the country is facing.

Panel D (What Is Next for the Balkans? Responsibility, Power to Progress, Perspectives) discussed the future perspectives of the Western Balkans. Panellists stressed that implementing reforms in the region is much easier when done with the help of European partners, but warned that the EU must keep an interest in moving the progress of EU accession along.

One of the most pressing issues of the future was discussed at Panel E (Food Security – A Reflection of International Society). Participants agreed that the issue of food security should be given top priority if the world is to avoid an extremely unstable future.

Energy future was the main topic of Panel F(What Will Power the Future?). The world's growing energy needs can most quickly and cheaply be answered through energy efficiency, panellists agreed. To be effective, this paradigm requires political and social will.

The seventh Bled Strategic Forum will be held at Bled on 2 and 3 September 2012. More about Bled Strategic Forum at www.bledstrategicforum.org.