

**SPEECH BY MR ZBIGNIEW GNIATKOWSKI, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
ON THE OCCASION OF POLAND'S CONSTITUTION DAY
MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA, 4 MAY 2016**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome all of you on the occasion of Poland's National Day. It has been 225 years since the adoption of the Polish Constitution of the 3 May 1791 which was Europe's first modern constitution.

I am pleased to announce that in July Poland will host the World Youth Day, with His Holiness Pope Francis and over 2 million young pilgrims from around the world, including New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Poles have a lot to offer thanks to our history. This year we celebrate 1050 years of Christianity in Poland. The strong identity enabled my compatriots to develop the concept of Freedom and Solidarity. The word 'Solidarity' (in Polish 'Solidarność') will always have a special meaning for us. We think mainly about the social movement that changed the world in 1980's through its contribution to the collapse of communism in Europe. A trade union, led by Lech Wałęsa and the fight for political changes leading to the Round Table talks and the first free elections in our part of Europe in 1989.

What most people may know about Poland is that 'Solidarity' was born there, that Nicolaus Copernicus, Frederic Chopin and Pope John Paul II were Polish.

What I would also like people to know is that Poland is an exciting destination with beautiful landscapes, creative and hard-working people, offering great business opportunities.

Since we re-joined the European family on 1 May 2004, Poland has established itself as a key nation in the heart of Europe. We are a modern country with strongly performing economy. The EU membership has been a clear economic success. But there is more to it: Poland is also aware of its responsibility for the European integration process.

Today we face many challenges – such as unprecedented inflow of migrants and refugees to Europe. Further struggles against economic crises and in particular youth unemployment.

One should not forget about peace and security in the European continent. This narrative became more pertinent in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea, war in Syria and terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. In July NATO summit to be held in Warsaw will assess current security challenges and concerns.

Here in New Zealand we carefully observe developments in distant Europe because today despite being so far away no one is immune to international problems. In this context it is very positive to see how much New Zealand is looking forward to close connections with Europe. I mean specifically the Partnership Agreement to be signed soon, and upcoming negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement with the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

New Zealand is an important partner for Poland in Asia and the Pacific. Last September in New York President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister John Key had a great meeting focused on bilateral relations and global challenges. Earlier the Speaker of the Parliament David Carter visited Poland with the group of parliamentarians. Minister Nathan Guy, and only recently Mike Petersen went to Poland as well. I strongly believe that our mutual cooperation will grow ever stronger in the years to come.

In February the bilateral agreement on film co-production entered into force. More links are steadily being developed between companies, universities and researchers.

It's very encouraging that last year yet again we noted a significant increase in our mutual trade. Many products brought from Poland to New Zealand are our best sellers. Polish food products, famous in particular for good and healthy quality, will be presented at Auckland Fine Food fair in June. An innovation summit is another project we are currently working on. There are many examples of modern face of Poland, our entrepreneurship and success stories, of which New Zealand may be a part too.

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our bilateral relations go back in history. Polish presence in New Zealand began in 1872 when early settlers arrived in Otago and Taranaki. In fact, the very first Polish trails were recorded one hundred years earlier, when two Polish scientists Forsters accompanied Captain James Cook in his 2nd journey to the Pacific and New Zealand.

However, very significant, often described as a milestone in our close relations, was an arrival of a large group of Polish Children, later known as Children of Pahiatua, in November 1944. There were more migrants who escaped from the imposed communism in Poland after the war and in the 80s. These events continue to strengthen ties between Poles and New Zealanders and between our countries.

Today members of the Polish community and newcomers are respected for their contribution to the growth of their new home country. Good example are Polish architects and engineers engaged in the rebuild of Christchurch. At the same time 7-thousand-strong Polish Community promotes rich traditions of the old homeland which are met with great interest.

Drodzy Rodacy, chciałbym przekazać Państwu wyrazy uznania za bliskie związki z Ojczyzną i kultywowanie polskich tradycji. Dziękuję także za bezcenne wsparcie i okazywaną życzliwość.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Polish Embassy makes great efforts to show the best of our culture. That's why we invite Polish artists to perform for New Zealand audience. Last year performers from Poland were present at the Wellington Jazz Festival and the Body Festival in Christchurch. A young Polish designer was awarded for her magnificent costume at the WOW competition in Wellington. Polish posters are exhibited. Polish poetry is translated into English and Maori. Also very recently, a Polish jazz pianist performed on Paderewski's grand piano on Waiheke Island and collaborated with a Polish-Maori jazz band in Hamilton. I am absolutely delighted that in just a few minutes we will have another chance to see Artur Dutkiewicz on this stage.

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year the Polish city of Sopot, near Gdańsk, where Solidarność was born, became a part of the *Solidarity Grid* project in Christchurch. A symbolic gift shall remind us of values that Poles and New Zealanders share: Freedom, for which our nations jointly fought in the Battles of England and Monte Cassino, and Solidarity - which our New Zealand friends had shown to my compatriots in the past.

Solidarity, responsibility and commitment are key words characterizing our approach to the United Nations' work. These principles will also guide us when Poland becomes a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2018. Poland has a long record of participating in peacekeeping operations and peace missions, often together with New Zealand. Like New Zealand, currently doing a great deal of good work in the Council, Poland's vision is to ensure that the UN is able to effectively respond to challenges and problems of the modern world.