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Embassy of Romania -
Washington, DC
1607 23rd Street, NW,
Washington, DC 20008

**Speech of Mrs. Daniela Gitman,
Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy
of Romania at the Reception
on the Occasion of EU Flag Raising
in Washington, DC**

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

I thank you very much for coming this evening to share with us the joy and the honor of raising the EU flag at the Embassy of Romania. I see many of our friends from the EU Member States, The US and the Romanian community who supported our accession journey and the hard work of Romania for the reform process and for implementing the commitments assumed during the negotiations with the EU.

I would especially like to acknowledge tonight the presence here with us of Ambassador John Bruton, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Washington, Ambassador Klaus Scharriot of Germany, the country which holds the EU Presidency and Mark Pekala, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasia with the State Department, all of whom I'll invite shortly to say a few words.

I would like to confess that this is a moment that we have all been waiting for such a long time with emotion, but, most of all, with hope. For the past years, the EU flag represented the symbol of an aim: from now on, this will mark an accomplished fact. I am proud that we can now open the ceremony and raise the European Union flag of 27 Member States over our Embassy.

Dear friends,

Thank you again for coming this evening and sharing with us this special moment of celebration for Romania – a moment of history that we don't witness every day. As of January 1st 2007, Romania has become a full fledged EU Member State and has taken its rightful place in the community of free nations.

We were always proud in stating that Romania – by its nature and essence - has always been a part of Europe, even though politically we belonged, for more than fifty years, to the wrong side of the Curtain. But our accession, together with Bulgaria's, is accomplishing a major political project for the reunification of Europe, started a decade and a half ago. Our accession, which concludes the 5th wave of enlargement, shows once again the fact that Europe has had the vision and the means to overcome the artificial separation brought by the end of the second world war, and to expand the area of democracy, security and solidarity.

The enlargement has always proven to be a huge driving force for the Union and an incentive for reforms and modernization for the new Member States concerned. In my opinion, Romania's EU accession represents a success story, a certificate for the future, and a clear indication that the reforms we have undertaken are irreversible and no return to the "trials" of the past is possible anymore. By becoming an EU Member State, Romania joins the community of values it has always aspired to: democracy, rule of law, protection of human rights, protection of minorities, freedom of expression.

Acceding to the EU has been a process which contributed to re-shaping Romania, and which helped us catching up with the European standards in all fields - political, economic, as well as at the level of mentalities. 2007 Romania is a result of this bold, fundamental endeavor of joining the EU and aligning to the EU standards. Romania has gone through a tremendous reform process – practically every sector of our lives has been radically changed in order to ensure conformity with the community acquis.

Accession will help us uphold the reforms undertaken in the justice system, the fight against corruption, or in building an accountable and transparent public life.

**EU FLAG RAISING CEREMONY
AT THE EMBASSY OF ROMANIA IN WASHINGTON, DC**

January 12, 2007

Union and League President participated at this special event that brought together the Romanian community in celebrating the European Union Flag Raising. The event also included an outstanding program featuring extraordinary Violin recital by Maestro Sherban Lupu, one of the world's leading performers of George Enescu's music. The program included George Enescu-Lautarul, Sarabande and George Enescu- Airs in Romanian folk style. Mr Lupu was playing on a Nicolo Gagliano violin from 1751 given to him by the "Ratiu Foundation". The Extraordinary recital was followed by Traditional Dances with the "Miorita" Ensemble of the Holy Nativity Romanian Orthodox Church in Chicago, Illinois.



Speech of Mrs. Daniela Gitman



Mr. Bogdan Neagu - Political Section of the Embassy of Romania in Washington DC, Mrs. Neagu, U&L President Daniela Istrate, Maestro Sherban Lupu - D.H.C. World's renowned violonist and musician, and Ana-Maria Comsa



Daniela Istrate with dancers from "Miorita" Ensemble



"Miorita" Ensemble

I can say now that we succeeded to build a more mature Romania, which looks now with confidence towards the European future. And this future has a common goal: to make Europe a better and safer place to live in. By all means, the EU is slowly, but steadily transforming into reality its vision: unity through diversity.

On the other hand, Romania has now the chance to express its position as a full fledged EU member and to participate in the decision making process of the EU. We have the immense opportunity to promote projects and issues important for the Romanian citizens.

I know that one of most frequently asked questions is related to what will Romania bring to the EU? And I must say that this is a win-win situation, and that Romania will represent an asset for the Union.

Economically speaking, we bring into the Union a dynamic economy, a market of 22 million consumers, a skilled labor force, as well as important business opportunities in many fields. Romania has maintained for six years in a row, a growth rate of 5.5% which is much higher than the old EU-15 average rate. In 2006, the growth rate averages 7%.

Politically speaking, Romania has a successful transition process expertise, and a valuable input of regional know-how, and is ready and willing to bring its contribution to the projects on the European agenda, such as the Constitutional Treaty, the energy security, developing the area of liberty and justice.

Our strategic location - neighboring the Black Sea region, the Western Balkans and the former Soviet Union states - represents an important asset for the Union in the region, as well as our participation in various regional cooperation partnerships.

Romania brings to the EU two new neighbors: the Republic of Moldova and the Black Sea region, where Romania is a key gate of the Trans-Atlantic community. We have now a new momentum to advance democracy in this area, and create sustainable economic opportunity. We will contribute with an in-depth expertise, promoting more stability and democracy in the neighborhood.

Last but not least, I have to underline that, as an EU Member State, Romania will work towards the strengthening of the Trans-Atlantic relationship. Romania strongly believes that US and EU are natural friends and allies, and these Transatlantic ties should become stronger and even more diversified than ever. We are very grateful to our American friends, for the constant US support aimed at speeding up the transition process of our country. Over the past few years we have developed a solid bilateral partnership which is a key milestone in Romania's foreign policy and we are determined to preserve it on this path.

And finally, but maybe first and foremost, I would really like to address a very warm thank you to our Romanian-American community here in the United States. Romania's remarkable achievement was not possible without your continuous support, love and assistance and I must say that this accomplishment of Romania is also your success story, and that I am privileged to serve you here in the US.

I will conclude by saying that today we open a new chapter in our history, as the EU membership means an opportunity, which - if correctly seized and managed in the following years - will translate into unprecedented benefits for the Romanian people and I invite you to look at Romania as a new frontier of opportunity in Europe.

Thank you!

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