

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Lithuania,
Colleagues, Prime Minister of Latvia, Prime Minister of Estonia,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors,
Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is a historic day for Lithuania, as well as for the entire Baltic region, to that matter. Together with the Latvian and Estonian Heads of Governments, we pronounce today the beginning of our *de facto* energy independence. I am excited and elated, as one of the most responsible tasks of our Government over the recent years has finally come to fruition. We knew all the way that we had no right for any delay whatsoever, despite many a hurdle on the path.

I am proud that Lithuania was able, in record time – a year and a half – to build the terminal, which has turned out to be the first of its kind in Europe. It was a very complex project in the vicinity of the UNESCO-protected area, therefore subject to the most rigid environmental requirements and calling for new technical solutions and high degree-professionalism. We sincerely thank the international team of designers and builders, who worked 24 hours a day on our rebellious Baltic Sea, whatever the weather.

The regional Klaipėda LNG terminal will open up possibilities for Latvia and Estonia as well as other Baltic countries as regards alternative gas supply sources, competitive prices, integration into the EU internal market and reinforced energy security. As a matter of fact, this facility has already had its impact in the negotiations for bringing the consumer price down in Lithuania, ahead of its launch into operation.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who made it possible for the natural gas repository-ship Independence to moor the new dock in Klaipėda. I am also grateful to our EU and NATO neighbours and partners for their support to the liquefied natural gas terminal project.

Our joint endeavour has proven that our strength lies in our unity. I am certain that this experience will well serve our future strategic projects in the region.