**Speech by Peter Kasalovsky at the meeting of the representatives of association IEF Economic Club and its International Peace Committee with the Chairman of the Gazprom Board of Directors and special representative of Russian President Victor Alexeyevich Zubkov**

Bratislava, April 27, 2016 at 1:00 PM at the Restaurant Liviano

Dear Victor Alexejevich,

Highly revered Mr. Zubkov

I am very pleased that you have accepted an invitation to meet with representatives of our 24-year old association Informal Economic Forum Economic Club and its International Peace Committee.

It is a fact that discussions at our 107th regular meeting on February 19, 2016, with the participation of the Secretary General of OECD José Ángel Gurría, and then again at the following 108th regular meeting on March 17, 2016 clearly confirmed the need of greater efforts to engage in equal dialogue between nations and their states in order to strengthen peace. This mission is not just a matter for political leaders to engage in; it is also a human duty of mere mortals like us.

Phenomena in the global and European politics, but also here at home, occurring in the second decade of 21st Century are more then alarming. Wars, poverty and suffering are not coming to an end; they are spreading instead and, to put it mildly, destabilize our civilization. Their real causes are masked and the protagonists are even described as “peacemakers”.

We are once again witnessing black-and-white political vision of our leaders and their official and, of course, also non-official associates and collaborators, as well as their unshakable belief in their own wisdom and truths.

It seams like if the majority of world politicians didn’t have an ability to communicate in accordance with common sense. We have reached a situation where there is no such a force, which could prevent their political myopia stemming from their self-complacency, weakness of rational abilities or just mere irresponsibility. Or they just misunderstand the meaning of the term “public service”.

Dear Mr. Zubkov,

Dear Ambassador Fedotov,

We all bear responsibility for the future development of our World and humanity within. To continue in current trends would be hazardous. We do know that we cannot be saviors or regulators of the course of history nor, especially, of present days and near future.

We, however, as people of mature age and each of those present from a position of honest and successful people, reject return to the days of bipolar Cold War. We reject it and we will fight it.

We realize that there are and will be problems with national memory, caused, among other reasons, by dying of the people. For instance, in the last quarter of the century more than two million of our fellow citizens have died. Thus, there is an ample opportunity to create self-serving interpretation of ancient and not so distant past, to conceal and distort indisputable facts. Our contemporaries holding government posts are insufficiently instructed in the history of our ancestors and have less and less understanding of fundamentals of life.

Many leaders are fond of power and let’s say the idea of chosenness. It is truly shameful that representatives of such small countries in terms of area and population do not want or are unable, or even cannot react to the tendentious and permanent criticism of the state of “their” human rights. Let alone to oppose the invectives of some representatives of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission or consider the opposition of majority of our citizens to the power based and un-consulted decisions about migration taken by the Germans.

We believe that Robert Schuman, Francois Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl and others have built a more than reasonable and acceptable basis for life in Europe. Today’s counter-acts are wrongly justified as acts of solidarity, humanity and tradition, but ultimately they are just justifications of inability to responsibly understand and react in timely and correct manner and prevent suffering of people migrating from several Asian and African states to Europe.

In these tense days we can also hear and read opinions of one of the prominent journalistic stars known in all social and media circles in the Western part of this world Edward Lucas, one of the most important personalities at The Economist and senior vice-president at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Washington, DC. Two weeks ago the author and British citizen in an article for The Times among other things wrote that America is rightly upset about ingratitude of the Europeans to the United States, which provide 70% of the cost for the defense of Europe against external threats, primarily from Russia. The author not only warns against the loss of “American umbrella”, he literally urges European Union to massively increase military spending. He pointed out that 500 million people, with a GDP of $20 trillion rely for their defense on 320 million people with a GDP of $ 17 trillion. Which means that less wealthy country provides not only 70 per cent of the European spending on defense, it also bears a disproportionate share of the risk. According to Lucas it is unlikely for Putin to invade Alaska but if he decided to attack the Baltic States, the US would risk to be drawn into a war, in which Chicago and New York could become the targets of intercontinental missiles.

Mr. Lucas further stated that security situation in Europe is getting worse due to civil war in Syria, Islamic State in Iraq, and anarchy in Libya. In addition, Russian Air Force and Navy threaten not only their immediate neighbors within the framework of NATO but also Sweden and Finland, which are not members of the Alliance.

Allow me one quote from that article: “Wise Americans understand that it would be beneficial for the US if Europe stayed strong, prosperous and united, and by lending support to Europe America can remain a global rule-setter. We Europeans must urgently began to spend more on defense and, what is even more important, to spend it wisely, pooling resources and capabilities.” These ideas are like a little house made of wet sand. They are a justification of current developments, one sided and to some extent dangerous. Such ideas create a blockade against any effort aimed at bringing more sensible and peaceful life to all nations and states, and create conditions for economically and socially more fulfilling existence. That is one of the reasons why we in our Annual Statement urge the leaders of the world to take the initiative and call for convening a global peace conference.

Esteemed Victor Alexejevich,

I believe that the time has come to mobilize all personalities with common sense, such as we definitely consider you to be. The world should at least reach a point where a mutually beneficial economic and social cooperation begins, where the questions of peace are not answered by new weapon systems and thinking about global nuclear confrontations. Therefore we are looking for allies in our ongoing work to prevent the danger to materialize.

I would like to point out that in the year 1994 the prestigious prize Golden Biatec was awarded to the first Russian Ambassador in Slovakia Sergey Yastrzhembski, in 2001 to the President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and in 2015 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov. Golden Biatec Award was established in 1993. As of today, among its laureates are 65 foreign economy and society leaders. Equally prestigious award Prominent of Economy was accepted by the leading figure in economics and former politician Ruslan Khasbulatov, and recently deceased Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov. Mr.Primakov once participated in our teleconference; later on we met in person and engaged in 3-hours discussion in Moscow.

Dear Victor Aleksejevich Zubkov,

I am honored to proclaim you especially as the personality who perceives the questions and conditions for peaceful life as the most important in human endeavor. Please accept the honor bestowed on you by our association in the form of the Golden Biatec 2016.