

## SPECIAL SECTION ON ROMANIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE - **LILIANA POPESCU**

### ROMANIA AND SECURITY CHALLENGES AT THE LIMITS OF THE EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC AREA. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND DIPLOMATIC ACTION - **BOGDAN AURESCU**

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The speech of the Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu is a lively statement of Romania's foreign policy in action. It contains the main directions and positioning as well as significant initiatives and novelties in terms of MFA's current activity. This is the main reason for including the translation of Former Minister Aurescu's speech in this issue of RJSP. To the extent that the readers of *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* are interested in Romanian affairs as well as in Romania's perspectives on international developments, this speech totally responds to this concern.

I will start with a few words about the Minister. Bogdan Aurescu, known as "the Hague hero" (as journalists named him as a result of being victorious on behalf of Romania at the Hague International Court of Justice in 2009, winning the disputed case of the Black Sea continental shelf between Romania and Ukraine), is a young career diplomat (born in 1973). Aurescu (Ph.D.) has a rich career, including: Romania's Agent at the International Court of Justice between 2004-2009; Chief Negotiator for Romania in the negotiations with the USA finalized with the Agreement between the United States of America and Romania on the Deployment of *the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania* (2011); Chief Negotiator for Romania finalized with the *Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century between the United States of America and Romania* (2011). All these illustrate the caliber of the present Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania. Appointed as Minister on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, Bogdan Aurescu also has a substantial academic activity reflected in a Ph.D. degree and Associate Professorship at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Law.

The speech we are presenting in this RJSP issue has been written entirely by Minister Aurescu. It has a rich and comprehensive content, as one can notice whilst reading it. It is a speech addressed to Heads of Missions, ambassadors, consuls, Romanian diplomats working abroad, on the occasion of the Yearly Reunion of the Romanian Diplomacy (September 2015 Edition). However, one may also read it as a “mission statement” for the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Minister Aurescu’s speech explains from the very beginning the actuality of the theme: *‘Romania and security challenges at the threshold of the European and Euro-Atlantic area. Risks, opportunities and diplomatic action’*. Romania is member of both the EU and NATO, and in her capacity of a state situated at the territorial edge of the two organizations, is exposed to acute challenges. Romania also faces a series of challenges of her own, a result of the reverberations of the instability developed in the East and the South.

One may identify in the speech a series of elements, which may be classified under the following headings: **Romania’s positions**, including her positioning within the EU, and within NATO; enhanced diplomatic activism; main diplomatic initiatives; main achievements of Romania’s diplomacy, including the area of public diplomacy.

In terms of Romania’s positioning, there is a wide presentation contained in Minister Aurescu’s speech. Distinctive are: the preoccupation with the continuation of good neighbourly relations, starting with the EU neighbours, Bulgaria and Hungary, continuing with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The concrete support for Moldova towards European integration is pointed out, as well as the fact that Romania is a sincere advocate of Ukraine’s territorial integrity. The strategic partnership with the USA is emphasized, referring to the frequent visits at high level between the two parties. In relation to Russia, Romania’s position is focused on “predictability and pragmatism.” Within the EU, Romanian diplomacy is committed to pursuing the *Investment Plan for Europe: European Fund for Strategic Investments* and is interested in the consolidation of *The Economic and Monetary Union* as well as in the project of an *EU Digital Market*. Moreover, Romania is favourable to the enlargement of the EU in the Western Balkans, pending upon reforms. “We were actively involved in supporting Montenegro and Georgia in the NATO accession process” reads the text. Certainly, all these positions are derived from the interest in Romania’s stability, democracy, and prosperity, as perceived in Bucharest. As far as the migration issue is concerned, Minister Aurescu affirms firmly that we need to find urgently proper solutions to the root cause of the problem, in the origin countries.

Romanian diplomacy is very active and this results in enhanced bilateral relations as well as in bilateral and multilateral initiatives. **Enhanced diplomatic activism** is reflected in new bilateral strategic mechanisms with Germany and France. Given the regional context of increased perceived insecurity, a trilateral strategic dialogue format has been set up between *Romania, Poland and Turkey*. Upcoming quadrilateral consultations at the level of Ministers between *Romania-Poland-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova* are announced. Also, to be noted, Romania already started preparations for the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council (planned for the second semester of 2019).

As far as **major Romanian diplomatic initiatives** are concerned, the speech is discussing several – all of which have to do with regional fragility, understood in a wider sense. Within the EU, the most important Romanian initiatives identified are:

the revision of the EU Security Strategy and of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The idea of establishing so-called ‘*Security Trusts*’ as part of the reform of ENP – covering both Eastern and Southern dimensions – has already been taken in by our European partners. Romania, Germany and Bulgaria have a common initiative: to revise the *Black Sea Synergy*. Within NATO, Romania proposed to develop a “two arm” integrated NATO strategy for the Southern and Eastern vicinities – which already got support from the allies. Yet, another initiative of Romania in conjunction with Spain and the Netherlands is focused on creating an *International Court for Combating Terrorism*.

The elements presented above – in terms of enhanced activism and successful initiatives may also be seen as achievements. However, we may identify some other Romanian diplomacy achievements pinpointed by Minister Aurescu in his speech. Being an active supporter of the review of the EU Security Strategy (*The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy*), Romania is already contributing to the existing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU, being placed 5<sup>th</sup> in term of seconded personnel and 1<sup>st</sup> place in terms of contractual personnel. The assertion of Romanian capacity in the area of cyber-defence, including within NATO, is yet another achievement. Given the fact that Romania underwent a tremendous change of foreign policy orientation 25 years ago, including the gradual loss of certain good and excellent relations in the area of Middle East and Northern Africa, the recent appointment of a special representative for MENA, in charge with re-launching trade and investment strategies, is an achievement. Turning now the direction and looking at the infrastructure of Romanian diplomacy, the internal reform which is under way in this period of time, particularly the human resources part is commendable and may be viewed as an achievement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also made progress in the areas of public affairs and public diplomacy. Recently the project “*Dialogue with the Diaspora*” was launched – essential in order to reconstruct the trust of the Diaspora as well as their support for the Romanian diplomacy and foreign policy. The relations with Romanians abroad represent a highly prioritized area due to the difficult situation created in previous elections, when large numbers of Romanian citizens did not have the opportunity to vote. The MFA is committed and already started preparations in view of organizing future elections on the premises of the embassies and consulates abroad.

A new public diplomacy platform this year – Dialogues@MFA – has been recently been launched. Also, earlier this year “*The MFA Strategy for Digital Diplomacy*” has been adopted for the 2015-2020 period, in line with the implementation of the EU Digital Agenda and Romania’s Digital Agenda. A noteworthy public diplomacy initiative is the complex project meant to promote internationally the intercultural/inter-ethnic relations model successfully developed by Romania and recognized at the European level.

The present regional and international contexts as well as the particular position of Romania at the edge of the European and Euro Atlantic area, in the vicinity of troubled neighbourhoods, gives weight to the process of thinking and acting diplomatically. The issue of migration, amply developed since Minister Aurescu’s speech (beginning of September), unfolded new dimensions of the challenges facing the EU. Some of them may be identified: solidarity within the EU, the commitment

to Schengen provisos, the relationship between Member States, further radicalisation of Euro-scepticism, a common foreign and security policy, a common defence policy. Finding solutions to the complex and expanded conflicts in the Middle East, finding a way out of the lack of state structures (or rather presence of multiple poles of power) in countries like Libya, Iraq, Syria, under the condition of certain military international involvement there – represent huge challenges for the European Union and for each Member State. The ideas presented by Minister Bogdan Aurescu in this speech/article represent a good starting point in understanding the Romanian perspective regarding the risks, the challenges and the opportunities in this complex situation.

*Liliana Popescu*