

Thank you very much for accepting our invitation! It is a very difficult night tonight. Most of the people we invited were stranded at the airport in Sofia. Sheikh Khalifa, our partner, was stranded in Istanbul. So, it is not going to be as big a celebration as I was expecting but, obviously, having you with us is a pleasure.

Very often when I talk to my staff, as you can see around they are young people, I advise them to dream. To dream in a strong, endless and wild way. This is how this company started – as a dream. Believe me, it's not a philosophical, or philological if you like, approach. That's exactly what it was - a dream. Mr.Tabakov reminded me few minutes ago that the Chamber of Commerce in Varna is almost 120 years old. I'm sure Mr.Tabakov remembers me also as a young man because I remember him much younger. That was 20 years ago.

So, it all started as a dream. Very often people say that crazy ideas can turn the world around. Our idea in 1994 with late Professor Pierre Van Esch pure, crazy and wild. At the time when the name of Bulgaria used to frighten people, we decided it was time to start an investment consulting company to bring in investors and to encourage development. Did we believe in this idea? Yes, we did. Because we were not very well aware of the situation in the country. This romantic foolishness we all have sometimes to go against the wind. To my surprise, two months later we managed to bring an investor, a very big Dutch company that was making kitchen tops, to invest in Veliko Turnovo in a woodworking company. Today, this company is very healthy, it has returned back to the ownership of the Bulgarian partners but is producing and exporting to Holland. That was our first successful adventure. This heroic foolishness, that I explained a minute ago, has actually carried on all the years of our existence and every year we made a step forward. With not much noise, not demanding recognition from anybody, without putting terms and, naturally, being in control with what we are doing. I'm going to give you a very conservative estimate that from 1999 up to now we must have invested in the region of Varna more than 120 million Euro and in other areas of Bulgaria another 6 or 7 million Euro. This was done quietly, we were instrumental and worked very closely with the Varna town planning which I firmly believe that, once it is applied, would create a totally new town with a different quality of life. And naturally, my friends, would bring in investors. It is, in my opinion, a total failure of the state administration and the government when investors don't have access to one of the biggest cities of the country. In my opinion – the best. This is, naturally, anti-productive, it is counterproductive, it shuts the prospects of the region and it also delays the development of the country. If we see the hundreds and thousands young people from Varna who are forced to emigrate and offer their services abroad. People who could have been the pylons for the development of this country.

I'm not going to talk about what can be done. We have plenty of time for those of you who are interested to discuss the matter. But there is a lot to be done – effective, practical and, above all, serving the national interest.

Once again, thank you very much for coming! Thank you for accepting our invitation. I appreciate that very, very much and I wish you all personal happiness, health and professional success. I wish our city better days and I wish also our people, eventually, to succeed in achieving what it deserves - happiness, security and welfare. Thank you very much!