Speech by Prime Minister Mindaugas Sinkevičius at the Gala Dinner of the BusinessEurope Council of Presidents

Vilnius, 26 November 2026

Distinguished business leaders,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today in Vilnius.

First of all, I would like to thank the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and BusinessEurope for bringing us together today. The organisations you represent give a voice to business communities from 36 European countries. This is a tremendous force, creating jobs and driving economic growth.

But the contribution of the private sector goes well beyond the economy. Businesses are also among the key drivers of progress in our societies. You create value, invest in innovation, contribute to public finances, strengthen the resilience of our countries and create prosperity.

When European businesses succeed, Europe succeeds.

Competitiveness is therefore not just about economic indicators. Ultimately, it is about our ability to progress as societies, improve people's well-being, ensure the sustainable funding of public services, invest in security and strengthen Europe's place in the world.

This is the kind of Europe we want to help build during Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which begins in just over a month, on 1 January 2027.

Our goal is to continue working towards a truly integrated **Single Market**, where businesses can operate, invest and expand without unjustified national or regulatory barriers. To this end, we must implement the *One Europe, One Market* roadmap and maintain our ambition to simplify regulation through the Omnibus initiatives. EU legislation should help businesses grow, not impose additional red tape. We must reduce administrative burdens, improve the regulatory framework and avoid gold-plating when transposing EU requirements into national law.

Strengthening Europe's industrial base is another key priority. We will seek progress on the Industrial Accelerator Act and the Made in Europe principle. Particular attention must be paid to developing strategic industrial capabilities in areas such as semiconductor manufacturing, space technologies, the defence industry, biotechnology, advanced engineering and clean

technologies. A European preference can help strengthen these sectors, but it must be targeted, proportionate and grounded in genuine economic security needs. It is important that all Member States, including smaller economies and innovative businesses, can benefit from the opportunities created by efforts to strengthen Europe's industrial base.

Today, however, we cannot talk about Europe's industrial strength and economic security separately from the issues of national security. Defence industrial capabilities, reliable supply chains, technological independence and critical infrastructure are all essential to Europe's competitiveness.

That is precisely why, during our Presidency, we will work towards a stronger European defence industry, increased production capacity, closer EU-NATO cooperation and continued support for Ukraine. We will also focus on protecting our external borders, countering hybrid and cyber threats, safeguarding critical infrastructure and strengthening crisis preparedness.

Our security is also inseparable from sustainable energy. European businesses need not only clean energy, but also affordable and competitively priced energy, reliable supplies and timely access to electricity grids.

We must step up the development of domestic energy production, renewable energy sources, nuclear energy, energy storage capacity and cross-border interconnections. At the same time, we must ensure that the energy transition does not undermine Europe's industrial competitiveness.

We also need to ease the administrative burden on decarbonisation projects, ensure more targeted and timely support from Emissions Trading System (ETS) revenues, and guarantee a level playing field for European producers. Climate objectives and industrial competitiveness must go hand in hand.

Europe **must not only strengthen its competitiveness and security but also remain open to global trade. However, openness should not come at the expense of our economic security and resilience**. Dialogue and cooperation must go hand in hand with the ability to protect Europe's economic interests.

Competition is intensifying due to trade imbalances, industrial overcapacity and geopolitical tensions. The global economic environment is increasingly shaped by unequal market access, systemic distortions and divergent competitive conditions.

We need to reduce excessive dependencies in strategic sectors, particularly in critical raw materials. Our approach should be based on diversification, stronger, more secure and reliable supply chains, and broader international partnerships.

Integrating economic security criteria into EU funding and public procurement frameworks is also important to ensure that EU funds are not used to increase our own strategic dependencies and vulnerabilities.

This is about managing risks, not closing markets or turning away from global trade.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania is approaching its Presidency of the Council of the European Union with a clear purpose: to help build a stronger, safer and more competitive Europe.

But we cannot achieve this on our own. We need you – Europe's business leaders – your expertise, ideas, investment and active engagement.

During Lithuania's Presidency, we will remain open to dialogue and constructive cooperation. We want to hear your voice – the voice of business – not only once decisions have been made, but also while they are still taking shape.

Because Europe's future depends also very much on our ability to work together, across governments, businesses and societies.

Thank you.