



**Celebrating Our Shared Freedom: The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Independence**  
**International Conference on the Freedom in the Western Hemisphere – Engagement with Europe’s East**

**June 15, 2026**

**Vilnius, Lithuania**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

To commemorate the significant occasion of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Independence, on the June of 2026 Lithuania will host a conference dedicated to the celebration of our shared freedom, common security challenges and possibilities of cooperation in the implementation of our national and mutual interests. The event aims to bring together the most prominent political leaders to discuss: 1) what are the new challenges facing transatlantic security and defence cooperation; 2) how experiences of different nations in their struggles for freedom can contribute to the fight for freedom in the Western Hemisphere and what are the new possibilities to cooperate and assist each other in the implementation of both – our national and shared interests; 3) what are and what could be the practical outcomes of our partnership and cooperation in the Western Hemisphere (Latin America and the Caribbean) and Europe’s East. The event is organized by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania.

**Background and Rationale**

On July 4, 2026, the United States of America will commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Independence – a date that not only signs not the ever-inspiring American will, but



also globally remains the most prominent symbol of freedom, democracy and human dignity, which are the cornerstone of every democratic nation – and an aspiration of the captive ones. Together with this fundamental occasion, the recently published National Security Strategy of the United States encourages us to collectively think of ways to strengthen our partnership, expand and deepen our relations in the face of growing security challenges both regionally and globally, with a primary shared goal of assisting each other in the implementation of our national interests. In the increasingly complex global environment, it is vital for us to think of ways of how European partners could engage in the implementation our shared interests in the Western Hemisphere, going beyond our strategic dialogue in the Indo-Pacific, which the US and Lithuania initiated in 2021. Today, the core of our interests in both – the Western and the Eastern Hemispheres – consists mainly of our common aim to limit the strategic encroachment by the aggressive external powers – China and Russia – into our regions (Latin America, Caribbean in the Western Hemisphere and Europe’s East in the Eastern Hemisphere), as well as enhancing their freedom. Amidst these growing security challenges, it is crucial to re-assess the most feasible options to deepen and expand our cooperation, thus strengthening our national positions, transatlantic bond and the democratic world.

The event follows a tradition of the President Valdas Adamkus Conference, which was the most prestigious annual strategic event, held in Vilnius, as well as the Centenary Conference, held in 2022 to commemorate the hundred years of our diplomatic relations. These conferences were attended by the most prominent stakeholders, including political figures, experts, journalists and political analysts from across the Europe and the USA to debate on topics of importance not only to Eastern Europe, but also to the entire transatlantic community. Today, President Valdas Adamkus has become a symbol of aspiration for freedom in Central and Eastern Europe and of a strong transatlantic partnership. The first Valdas Adamkus Conference, convened in the August of 2017, discussed the need for a strong regional leadership. In 2018, the Conference focused on Russia’s future in Europe and the strategic transatlantic agenda aimed at restoring our resilience. In 2019 the partnership for transatlantic energy cooperation was being assessed, as well as the need for a new, more effective, and strategy-driven Eastern policy. The Centenary Conference focused on celebrating, as well as reassessing the path covered together by the Lithuanian-American and the wider transatlantic partnership, during the hundred years of relations.



## AGENDA

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**

*(Venue: the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Gedimino Ave. 53)*

**12:00 Welcome Coffee, Registration**

**12:30 OPENING SESSION: Celebrating Semiquincentennial Together**

**SPEAKERS:**

**H.E. Mr. Juozas Olekas**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

**H.E. Kęstutis Budrys**

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania (video format)

**H.E. Amb. Kara C. McDonald**

Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Lithuania

**Mr. Deividas Matulionis**

Senior Advisor to the President and Head of the National Security Group

**Mr. Tadas Vizgirda**

Chair of the American Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania

**Mr. Damon Wilson**

President and CEO of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) (video format)



## **13:00 I PANEL**

### **Captive Nations: Eastern Hemisphere**

#### **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

**H.E. Mr. Ruslan Stefanchuk**

Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (online participation)

**H.E. Ms. Audra Plepytė**

Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

**Mr. Robert Wilkie**

Chair on American Security in the America First Policy Institute

**David J. Kramer**

Executive Director, George W. Bush Institute and Vice President George W. Bush Presidential Center (online participation)

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**Mr. Oleksandr Merezhko**

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Ukraine

**Mr. Laurynas Kasčiūnas**

Deputy Chair of the National Security and Defense Committee

**Mr. Adrian Balutel**

Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Foreign Affairs in the Parliament of Moldova, Former Chief of Cabinet in the Cabinet of President Sandu

**Mr. Sargis Khandanyan**



Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Parliament of the Republic of Armenia  
(online)

**Lord Darren Mott**

Member of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom

**Ms. Nino Evgenidze**

Executive Director at the Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC), Co-founder of the  
Tbilisi International conference

**Mr. Oleg Magaletsky**

Founder of the Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum

**Mr. Franak Viačorka**

Chief of Staff to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Head of the United Transitional Cabinet of  
Belarus

**Ms. Anna Fotyga**

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

**DISCUSSION WITH THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE**

Moderated by:

**Mr. Žygimantas Pavilionis**

Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Republic of Lithuania

**15:00 COFFEE BREAK**

**15:30 II PANEL**

**Captive Nations: Western Hemisphere**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

**Ms. Barbara Feinstein**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere

**Mr. Pedro Urruchurtu**

Venezuelan activist, professor and Coordinator of International Affairs of Vente

**H.E. Mr. Mario Díaz-Balart**

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Chair of the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (video format)

**Ms. María Corina Machado**

Representative of the Venezuelan opposition (video format)

**H.E. Hon. Joe Wilson**

Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee; Co-Chair, Victims of Communism Caucus (video format)

**H.E. Mr. Don Bacon**

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Co-Chair of the House Baltic Caucus (video format)

**SPEAKERS:**

**Mr. Remigijus Motuzas**

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

**Mr. Marko Mihkelson**

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Estonian Parliament



**Mr. Pavel Fischer**

Senator and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security in the Senate of the Czech Republic

**Mr. Orlando Gutiérrez-Boronat**

Secretary General of the Assembly of the Cuban Resistance

**Mr. Björn Söder**

Member of the Defense Committee in the Swedish Riksdag

**Mr. Radosław Fogiel**

Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm

**Mr. Hugo Acha**

Senior Research Fellow for CTOC, Center for a Secure Free Society, and Director of Research and Outreach, Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba

**DISCUSSION WITH THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE**

Moderated by:

**Ms. Pamela Asturizaga**

Director for Cuba and Venezuela, International Republican Institute (IRI)

**17:30 CONCLUSION**