

Dear Fellow Citizens of Hungary, dear Friends from America,

The President of the United States announced just a few minutes ago that the citizens of the Republic of Hungary along with citizens of many other European states will be able to travel to the USA without a visa. This decision can be considered as a new chapter in the long story which began in 1989-90. Hungary is a free and independent country; its citizens have all the rights equal to the citizens of Western nations to whom we have always wanted to resemble. We are finally part of the community we wanted to join for centuries.

In the years of the regime change, the people of Hungary decided to become free. We wished to live as free citizens of a democratic world. That is why we have done all we could to become a member of the strongest military alliance, NATO that is, along with becoming a member state of the European Union. I know that nowadays, these facts seem to be evident, but we all have to remember that our predecessors, the ones we consider as icons of Hungarian history, the ones whose words echo in our heads even after centuries, wanted Hungary's fate to be tied to the West. It is the duty of our generation to strengthen these ties.

It was not a long time ago that we celebrated the borders being eliminated between Hungary and the EU. We are proud to be part of the Schengen zone. Even the old cramp that our parents or even my own generation used to suffer from seems to vanish when approaching the border at Hegyeshalom. We are free to cross as if there were no borders at all. We are telling stories to our children about how nervous and excited we used to be a few decades ago when crossing those borders, the gates to a free world. They seem to be perplexed and confused about stories like this or stories about the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain splitting Europe into two parts: nations that were independent and nations that

were sadly not. It is an important stage of this process that each Hungarian citizen who wants to travel to the United States can do so in the very same way as a French, British or German citizen can. I believe this is the true essence of what we call the equality between nations.

We had our battles to fight for this right, of course. Consecutive governments, leaders of the country had to argue and cope for putting this type of discrimination to an end. It wounded our national pride. We were not happy at all to explain ourselves on why we would like to travel to the United States, which is considered to be the centre of the Free World. We simply wanted to see the Statue of Liberty at the shores of New York City as free citizens of the world.

The moment has finally come. Many will experience in the coming days or weeks the visa queues, along with the doubt it caused, disappearing. The doubt, which held many of us back from traveling to the USA.

I would like to thank everyone who helped make this dream become real: Hungarian politicians and their American partners. Thank you for demolishing another wall. I guess we all did what our people, the people of Hungary and the people of the United States always needed. It is very important that Europe and the US, the US and Hungary form our present and our future together. In order to do that, it is essential that persons, thoughts and knowledge are able to flow between our countries.

So, ladies and gentlemen, may I wish you a pleasant journey with more freedom, more equality and with great dignity! Thank you.