

Moldovan prime minister opening Forum 2000 in Prague

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Prague, Oct 14 (CTK) - Democracy cannot be taken for granted and one must fight for it every day, Moldovan Prime Minister Maia Sandu said at the **opening** of this year's international conference **Forum** 2000 today.

Sandu warned that along with the values of freedom and democracy, politicians also had to think of the population's well-being. Otherwise, people can succumb to the temptations of authoritarians who may promise them an improvement in the living standards, but deprive them of democracy.

This year, the **Forum** 2000 has the slogan Recovering the Promise of 1989, referring to the democratic changes in the world 30 years ago.

Sandu said in her **opening** speech that at the end of 1989 and beginning of 1990, Moldovans, too, were fighting for freedom and democracy and managed to gain independence from the Soviet Union.

She said there were the expectations that freedom and democracy would soon take roots in Moldova, but this was wrong.

Sandu said her country had faced a systemic corruption, returning to an authoritarian rule.

The world should take a lesson from the Moldovan developments and realise that democracy could not be taken for granted. Democracy is a result of hard work, she added.

Sandu also warned that although freedom and democracy were essential values, politicians must not forget about the population's well-being. If many people live in poverty, one cannot be surprised at their voting for authoritarian leaders, she added.

She cited the situation in Moldova at the turn of the century. At that time, the country had a democratic system, but over three-quarters of the population lived below the poverty line, which enabled an election victory of the Communists, who restricted freedoms again.

This year, the 23rd **Forum** 2000 deals with the 30 years of life in free society and the challenges faced by democracy.

Slovak President Zuzana Caputova was to be the main speaker today, but she cancelled her participation for health reasons on Sunday.

The **Forum** 2000 conference of world personalities and thinkers was founded in 1997 by post-Communist Czechoslovak and Czech president Vaclav Havel (1936-2011), Jewish writer Elie Wiesel (1928-2016) and Japanese philanthropist Yohei Sasakawa, 80.

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