



*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants!*

Allow me to extend a very warm welcome to you all!

It is an honour to address such an audience, a group of individuals who take care of supreme audit institutions reputation each and every day.

The Court of Audit is a relatively young organisation, having started operations in January 1995. Since then we have steadily increased both the number of audits undertaken and the audit reports issued and perceived the heightened media and public interest in our work.

The Court of Audit is uniquely placed to provide Parliament as well as wider public with assurance on the financial management, regularity and value for money with which Ministries and other bodies have used public funds. We are a professional organisation and have a good track record of providing assurance on these subjects. The mission of the Court of Audit is to inform the public about important audit findings from the audits of state bodies and other public funds users in a timely and objective manner. In addition, by drawing on our experience and expertise the Court of Audit delivers best practice advice to state bodies and other users of public funds on how to improve their financial management.

We endeavour to be a transparent, objective and independent organisation that has set four key values to be exercised in our daily work — independency, professionalism, integrity and excellence. These values give us a shared identity and enable us to work together to achieve our common goals. Putting our values into practice enables us to carry out our tasks efficiently, effectively and consistently.

Our communication of information to public authorities and the general public is in compliance with the EUROSAI and INTOSAI principles regarding communication policy and the dissemination of information. It is implemented through the publication of audit reports, annual reports, strategies and other documents.

Among the seven objectives set within our Strategy 2007-2013 we also defined the objective **“To continually improve communications and to strengthen the co-operation with others.”** We further quoted that we will continue building on the good communications that we have with the media. We will achieve this by continuing with our briefings with the media on all major reports and ensuring that they have access to reports via our website.

In fact, within one year the Slovene Court of Audit has taken important measures related to media and public relations and also a big step forward by creating what often is the organization’s principle interface with public - the new web-page. Thus we became more responsive and transparent. When reporting on our new web-page one of the daily newspapers commented that “we exposed ourselves almost to the nude.” Actually, each day we web-publish what we produce since we are aware that information is power. All of the Court of Audit reports are public. Once issued, they are also accessible to the public on the Court of Audit website. Our website also sets out the audits which are currently in progress, allowing members of Parliament and the public to easily identify the work that we are currently carrying out. We will continue to maintain this visibility of our work.

We also believe that credibility, ethics and responsiveness is what really matters in everyday relations with media. If we adequately transmit our messages and our mission to the media we will also appropriately inform our publics. The

Court of Audit has its clear mission – Watching Over Public Money. By doing that we also call public attention to the fact that they have the right to know how public money is spent.

For at least half century, public relations experts have struggled to explain what it is they do. Providing information? Media relations? Reputation management? Counselling the organisation? All of that? In fact, American historian Heilbroner once described the PR profession as a brotherhood of people whose common burden is that no two of them can ever quite agree on what they do.

I believe that PR does not stand only for Public Relations, but also for Public Responsibility and Public Responsiveness since transparency and stakeholder participation make our work both legitimate and sustainable. Public relations officers or consultants have a great responsibility in helping to achieve a more harmonious relation between an organisation and the media. I am aware that it is not always an easy task especially with the journalists always on the run for exclusive stories, tabloids lurking for unexpected and general public often lacking time for estimation of news importance.

The purpose of public relations is therefore to create understanding within the organization and between the organization and its publics. It is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest. British Institute of Public Relations defined public relations as the discipline which looks after reputation. They further explained: “Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.”

It is also important to be conscious of the fact what are the main trends related to the fast evolution of PR in last decades:

- The increased awareness of people for the right to know.
- The increased importance of public opinion.
- Heightened public awareness based on the growth of the internet.

Only if we understand these trends and their importance we can plan, deliver messages, react and assess our results.

What you will be listening to in these two days is highly relevant and I am deeply convinced that your colleagues and our experts will deliver exquisite contributions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for active participation and to wish you a fruitful cooperation and exchange of the experiences and best practices. I am positive that this event will become traditional and the excellence of your highly important work will become even more recognised.

*Thank you!*