Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

I would like to thank you all for coming to our Embassy on this special day for Bulgaria!

On this very day, almost a century and a half ago, in 1878, Bulgaria reappeared as a nation on the map of Europe – right in the middle of the Balkans, and in its ethnic borders in the provinces of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia.

In close proximity to the Black Sea Straits, an old state was reborn. The same state, which for centuries before had been a major player in the geopolitical dynamic of the continent.

Bulgaria’s liberation had been preceded by a long and bloody struggle for national self-determination, and by a national cultural Revival – and ultimately – a political movement, spread all over the Balkans.

The sacrifices and blood, shed in the struggles, called for the outspoken support of many of the brightest European minds.

Hundreds of intellectuals, writers, scientists, high-ranking politicians voiced their support for our independence. To the voices of Victor Hugo and Giuseppe Garibaldi on the Continent, today we remember those of Charles Darwin, Oscar Wilde, James Bourchier, William Gladstone, and many other British statesmen and men of letters.

In the war for the liberation of Bulgaria in the ranks of the Imperial army, shoulder to shoulder with the Russian soldiers and the Bulgarian volunteers, the Finnish and Romanian soldiers, fought also tens of thousands of our Ukrainian brothers, whose descendants today are shedding their blood, facing an utterly unprovoked aggression.

The participation of Ukrainians in our liberation makes our solidarity and support for Ukraine today a moral duty.

The war waged against our Ukrainian brothers has a clear objective - to impose a dramatic shift in the geopolitical environment in Europe. Let us remember, that just a few days ago, a nuclear threat was also, more or less directly, voiced by Moscow, which leads us to the conclusion that someone out there is in a dramatic divorce with reality. What we have, is a war waged without a cause, a war against a peaceful neighbour.

I am tempted to echo the words of President Roosevelt during one of the grimmer moments of World War Two: "These days will live in infamy".

If today we Bulgarians raise our voice, it is because this unjust war clearly marks the dividing lines between the aggressor and the victim, between evil and good. There is no better encouragement for a geopolitical predator, than the feeling that he would face weakness and lack of resolve, or a breach in allied solidarity.

This is why, while sharing my admiration for the bravery of our Ukrainian brothers, I feel proud about the unity and the resolve of NATO member states and of EU members too.

I commend the resolute stance and involvement of out British allies, with whom we share common values and common vision for the European security architecture.

My personal satisfaction is even greater, because in these times of challenge the bilateral ties between the United Kingdom and Bulgaria are on an upward course. Despite the Covid pandemic, we have seen trade between our two countries returning to the pre-Brexit levels, and we have ensured that our citizens, in both the UK and in Bulgaria, have successfully adapted to the end of the Transition Period. Bulgarian students in the UK and thousands of British students in Bulgaria are looking forward to building further bridges for engagement and cooperation. Our law enforcement agencies and those in the defence sector work actively together to tackle organised crime and trafficking and to make UK and Bulgaria, as well as the wider region, safer as a result.

It is for this very reasons that we are further considering a strategic framework to enhance our bilateral cooperation in all major spheres - security, high technologies, cyber, climate, prosperity, culture etc.

And now, after thanking you for your attention, allow me, dear friends, to raise a glass to the health of Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second!