*Spoken word applies.****Mr. Matej Markovič***

Esteemed Mr Chancellor, guests of honour and, of course, dear recipients,

I am honoured to be standing here before you, as I am well aware in what eminent midst I have found myself. Honoured because I remember my young self and the path of my student years, which was far from the path you are treading on. But it’s never too late, as they say…

The path I follow and thanks to which I stand before you today, dear students, is a path that is rather new, but all the more intense and passionate for that… It is a path borne out of something completely ordinary, something available to each and every one of us. This is a path borne out of simple dreams, which in themselves are no guarantee of success, because all of us dream, yet not all of us succeed in breathing life to our dreams. This awakening is the divide between those, if I may use an expression from sports, who will never see the finish line, and all others – the potential winners. It singles out the bold, those with a thirst for knowledge or reaching for the stars, those who believe in a different tomorrow, those for whom the flow of the river does not stop from swimming ahead on the course they have set. This is why everyone, who at this point decides to try to his or her best abilities to change something, is already a winner in my book. But there is only little space for the very best: these are people whose bars were set the highest, whose goals can only be reached by a precious few, whose path is long, strenuous, unpredictable, filled with expected and unexpected obstacles that will discourage or at least divert most people. But it is precisely you, dear recipients, who have so far managed to overcome all such obstacles along the way in your respective fields and pursue the goals you have set so high… you are the ones who reached for the stars.

Indeed, life is not always an easy journey. Falls, tears and failures must be part of our lives, otherwise we would be unable to appreciate their bright opposites. If you could reach your goal without efforts, sacrifices and obstacles, it would certainly lose its value and at the same time not provide you with the impetus and strength needed to tackle your next objective. And life would be much less dynamic. Even more essential, in my opinion, is the awareness that our paths should not lead directly from A to B, for we risk missing out on other things that matter in life, perhaps even more than the original goal. May your journey be a pleasant cruise involving those you hold dearest, friends and all that enriches you and makes your lives varied, colourful and interesting. Never let those who mean the most to you become obstacles on your path, I mean what I say!

And finally, dear recipients, allow me to talk to your hearts. A life without love, compassion and help to fellow human beings and other living creatures is like an empty house without a name. When you open your heart, it is called Home. Therefore, may your path be interspersed with moments bringing joy to others and enriching your own soul, changing the world into a better place one step at a time. May your hearts never lose awareness that at the end of a life, only the good we did for others is what really counts.

My heartfelt congratulations on your achievements and accolades. Best of luck… and plenty of heart along your path!