



INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE SEECP PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY BUCHAREST, May 10, 2014

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DECLARATION

on the inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly

We, the Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP participating states

Recalling the conclusions of the First Conference of the Speakers of the national Parliaments of South East European countries held in Athens in 1997 which noted the political will to create a forum of regular discussions to promote good understanding and cooperation, including the establishment of a Consultative Assembly of our Parliaments,

Guided by the principles enshrined in the *Charter of good neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation*, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP,

Welcoming the work and the results achieved by the Regional Cooperation Council, as an operational arm of the SEECP,

Reiterating the importance of the *Memorandum of Understanding on parliamentary cooperation in South East Europe*, adopted in Sofia in 2008, aimed at reshaping and recalibrating the parliamentary cooperation,

Reaffirming the strong political commitment of our Parliaments, expressed at the 8th Conference of Speakers of Parliaments held in Antalya in 2010, to further institutionalize the parliamentary cooperation with an ultimate goal to set up a Parliamentary Assembly,

Congratulating the activity of the Working Group established in 2011, for its contribution to the process of institutionalization of the parliamentary dimension of

the SEECP and for the efforts to advance our common interests, especially for making possible the adoption of Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly,

Welcoming the outcome of the 10th Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP participating states - Final Declaration and Joint Statement - adopted in Ohrid in 2013, which confirms the will to create a SEECP Parliamentary Assembly with the Inaugural Session to be held in Bucharest in spring 2014,

Acknowledging the importance of the enlargement process and the commitments and reforms undertaken by all SEECP Participating States in their EU integration efforts,

Commending the agreement reached between Belgrade and Pristina which contributes to the further improving of the cooperation in the region,

Have agreed to:

Welcome the establishment of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly with the convening of its Inaugural Session in Bucharest, as an outstanding moment in the development of the parliamentary cooperation in our region,

Confirm that the basic conditions for transforming the parliamentary dimension into a SEECP Parliamentary Assembly - the putting in place a decision-making mechanism and establishing three General Committees dealing with specific issues, namely on: 1) Economy, Infrastructure and Energy, 2) Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, and 3) Social Development, Education, Research and Science - are met,

Praise the entry into force of the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly which contributes to increasing of its institutionalization,

Revise the Rules of Procedure by the next Chairmanship-in-Office in 2015.

Highlight that, until having a fully functional Secretariat and an operational budget, the national parliament holding the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall serve, with assistance of the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe, as an ad hoc Secretariat for the Plenary Session, the Standing Committee, the President and the Bureau of the Assembly while the national parliament holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or of an Ad hoc Working Group shall also fulfil the tasks of an ad hoc Secretariat for the respective body of the Assembly,

Stress that the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly can play a key role in assisting the national Parliaments of the SEECP Participating States to harmonize their own legislative framework with EU acquis by developing a comprehensive exchange of best practices, knowledge and experience with the Parliaments of EU member-states,

Observe that this Assembly can contribute to the enhancement of inter-parliamentary regional cooperation and promotion of effective cooperation with other regional initiatives such as EU macroregions,

Emphasize the significant role of the newly-established SEECP Parliamentary Assembly in promoting the democratic principles of rule of law and human rights, as prerequisites for stability, economic development and social cohesion,

Commit ourselves to promoting in the region free, fair and transparent elections and to observing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as a means of making our societies more democratic and more inclusive,

Express our readiness to cooperate with the European Parliament on a wide range of issues related to the EU enlargement agenda and the regional cooperation, as well as with other parliamentary fora and institutions in Europe,

Assert our willingness to develop a close and effective cooperation between the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and the Regional Cooperation Council,

Acknowledge the decisive role played by the current SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office in the institutionalization process of the parliamentary dimension, by providing all required conditions and making all the efforts to successfully support this process,

Recommend to the next Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly to make every effort to continue the development of this important regional parliamentary institution.