

PA SEECP Inaugural Session

9-11 May 2014

Debate on “The future role of the SEECP PA in the European frame”

10 May 2014

**Address by Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea,
Speaker of the House of Deputies,
President of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly**

Dear colleagues and guests,

The general theme of the debate we suggested expresses, according to the conviction we all share, the idea that the South-East Europe, once it has defined its identity at regional level, looks towards the European Union as an objectively necessary stage of its evolution. This idea is in fact emphasized and detailed in the fundamental documents debated and submitted to our Session for adoption.

First it must be said that the historic step we took by transiting to the Parliamentary Assembly format opens a new stage in the regional cooperation in South-East Europe. It is a step expected for many years that has been made despite some skeptical opinions, thus demonstrating that the parliaments in the region score significant progress on the road of democracy and place common interests on the first plane.

The setting up of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly opens opportunities not only for parliamentary diplomacy but also for cooperation at the governmental level of the SEECP. The parliamentary assembly format offers a considerable number of instruments for developing cooperation in this part of Europe and making it more efficient, as well as for asserting the SEECP at European level.

Among others, I have in mind the following:

- the MPs are involved in a structured way, benefitting by the presence of the presidents of parliaments as heads of member delegations – a specific aspect whose importance resides in facilitating political support at the highest level;
- the Assembly is structured on several levels, each having a well defined aim; I mention the expertise and the resources that the three General Committees we are setting up tomorrow can offer;
- the institutionalization of the Assembly also offers opportunities of asserting and relating it to other organizations and institutions from the region;
- last but not least, it sends a major political signal and contributes to the consolidation of the profile and the voice of this region.

The Chairmanship-in-office believed that these elements should become accessible as soon as possible, to the benefit of the citizens of the SEECP participating States. To bring this moment closer, at the latest Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments held in Ohrid in 2014 we put forward the proposal to host the Inaugural Session in Bucharest.

This was a difficult undertaking that we carried through thanks to huge diplomatic efforts which, as we can see, paid off.

Now we are entering a new stage that requires fresh efforts on our part, in order to raise the degree of institutionalization of our Assembly, develop its instruments of action and make the most efficient use of the opportunities it offers.

The fact that the South-East Europe Cooperation Process that represents a true “voice of the region, for the region” was founded by our countries as an expression of their solidarity and dedicated to strengthening stability, security and good neighbourly relations, to intensifying multilateral economic cooperation, promoting cooperation in the fields of human, social and cultural affairs, cooperation in the field of justice, combating organized crime and terrorism, is even more relevant today, when an essential bounding factor of the SEECP is our common aspiration to European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the whole South-East Europe.

I would like to underline, and I am sure you will agree with me, that everything we shall achieve at regional level will be not only put in the service of the citizens of our countries, but also conceived in the perspective of European integration, therefore to the benefit of the whole European Union. I have in mind, among others, the cooperation with the European Parliament on all aspects pertaining to EU enlargement, as well as the cooperation with other parliamentary fora and institutions in Europe. At the same time, I have in mind the exchanges of experience and the harmonization of the legislation with the community acquis. These are not the only possible examples and I am sure that our debate will reveal many other possibilities of cooperation at European level.

Of course, the prospect of European integration will be a strong incentive for our nations to record progress on all planes. At the same time I would like to underline that, through everything we shall undertake, we mean to behave as a factor of regional – and consequently, European – stability.

I am sure those who will take the floor will refer to these aspects and offer us subjects of reflection for our future actions.

I am waiting with vivid interest for your remarks and thank you for your attention.