

10 May 2014

Address by Ryszard Górecki, President of the BSPC, at the Inaugural Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, Bucharest 10 May 2014

Honourable Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, BSPC, I would first of all like to express our great appreciation for being invited to this Inaugural Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. It is an honour for me to represent BSPC at this truly seminal event.

We congratulate you on your important decision to establish permanent structures for parliamentary cooperation in South-Eastern Europe. We wish you all success in your forthcoming efforts to develop efficient instruments and methods for your activities.

The Parliamentary Assembly that you have now launched is the outcome of thorough deliberations and preparations by your participating parliaments, as well as by your Working Group on the Parliamentary Dimension. I am pleased to note that this process has also included contacts with us in the BSPC.

BSPC was started in 1991, in a period of turbulent political change in the Baltic Sea Region. The Cold War was melting away and the Iron Curtain was dismantled. There was a broadly felt need for a platform for open-ended inter-parliamentary dialogue on how to deal with joint challenges and potentials. The BSPC thus emerged against a background of dramatic events and in a conviction that political cooperation and dialogue are central means to prevent conflict and promote joint progress.

We in BSPC consider it fundamentally important to have all national parliaments, regional parliaments and parliamentary organizations in the Baltic Sea Region on board. There can be no credible cure to any of our problems if some stakeholders are left outside the decision-making and implementing processes. The EU- and the non-EU- countries must be able to cooperate on an equal footing.

We parliamentarians are elected by the people in our constituencies, and we are ultimately accountable to them. We are, in a sense, the eyes, ears and mouths of the citizens we represent. Therefore it is our duty

- to listen and give voice to the grassroots in our constituencies;
- to raise awareness and opinion on issues;
- to drive political issues in parliaments and relevant committees;
- to exert political pressure on our governments to fulfill their commitments and obligations, and to act as watchdogs to make sure they do;
- and, not least, to initiate and adopt legislation and budgets

Parliamentary cooperation can contribute to democratic, transparent and inclusive political processes. People-to-people contacts constitute the basis for political and socio-economic development. It is therefore important to involve civil society, NGOs, and – not least – youth in the political cooperation structures and processes. It is also necessary to facilitate mobility and to tear down administrative and physical hurdles for an unimpeded movement of people and enterprises across borders.

A central part in the development of an organization is to build networks and confidence. The quality of political cooperation rests to a great deal on the quality of inter-personal relations. Good, sincere and reliable relations contribute to an open and permissive atmosphere in which members can debate conflicting positions in a constructive manner, and also rejoice at joint achievements.

Many of the issues and challenges facing a political organization are complex and have different repercussions for different countries. A parliamentary forum can provide an arena where diverging views are brought to the surface for a candid political debate. That, in my opinion, is a fundamental condition for finding compromises and moving forward towards joint solutions.

At the end of the day, though, the value and success of parliamentary cooperation will be judged by its capacity to deliver tangible and positive results in people's everyday life.

Let me close by reiterating our wish for your success. We look forward to continued contacts and exchange between our organizations. The 23rd BSPC will be arranged in Olsztyn, Poland, in August. You are cordially welcome to join us there!

Thank you for your attention.