

Inaugural Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly

May 9-11 2014 – Bucharest, Romania

Address of [H.E.Mr. Ilir Meta](#)
Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

General Theme: “The Future Role of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly in the European Frame”

Honourable Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends.

It is a true pleasure and special honour to be here in Romania, at what we consider to be an historic moment for the South-East European Cooperation Process.

I recall how 14 years ago, right here in Bucharest, in my privileged capacity of Prime Minister of Albania, we signed together with other colleagues the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation.

I am particularly pleased to see the immense progress over the years and to have, once again, the privilege of being part of the inauguration of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Process, which in my view is an extraordinary moment in the development of the parliamentary cooperation in our region.

Colleagues, the SEECP represents an excellent platform of cooperation between our countries, not only benefiting regional integration, but above all serving the European aspirations of each of our countries. Out of twelve members, five are EU members now and the rest of us are all aspiring to one day be fully integrated into the European Union.

I believe that the work of the Parliamentary Assembly should serve precisely this shared goal of our countries – integration within the European Union.

Despite increasing euro scepticism across many countries in the continent, the European project is more important now than ever. I represent here a country with an overwhelming majority of its population fully supporting EU integration. Coming from what was once the most isolated country in Europe, I believe we have a very clear understanding of the tangible results the EU perspective can produce for the daily lives of our citizens.

Two days ago, we celebrated *Europe Day* with about 150 youth from across Europe gathered in Tirana, marking the 64th anniversary of Robert Schuman’s vision for an Economic Union. I underlined to our young guests my unshakable conviction that the European Union has been the

most successful peace project to date, which has solidified stability, reconciliation, democracy, human rights, social solidarity and economic development for over six decades.

It is in the framework of such a triumphant project that our regional Process should go forward, which for us here means strengthening the parliamentary cooperation of the SEECP in line with the reinforcement of European democratic values and standards of governance.

Guided by the principles of regional ownership and responsibility, our Parliaments should now focus their cooperative efforts on establishing a concrete platform of parliamentary exchanges which will serve the further harmonization and alignment of legislation with the EU *Acquis*, benefiting regional economic and social integration and ultimately, revitalizing the cause of EU Enlargement itself.

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This year we marked the 10th Anniversary of the biggest wave of EU Enlargement across Central and Eastern Europe, which has proven the double positive effects of the process, in terms of the democratization and socio-economic development of new members, but also in terms of increased trade and economic exchanges between old members with the newly integrated part.

I am convinced that the transformative power of the European Union has turned this block of new members into a dynamic and meaningful engine of economic growth and trade exchanges for the whole continent, but also into a fine model of success for all other aspiring members like us.

In this spirit, and at the same time aware of the strength of our constructive and cooperative policy in the region, and would like to reconfirm that Albania remains firmly dedicated towards the strengthening of the SEECP and the demolition of barriers between all our countries. We share not only a common history, but also a common path towards the EU. Therefore, the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly would not make any sense, if it doesn't serve the EU Aspirations of our countries.

The Parliamentary Assembly comes at a very crucial moment during the global economic crisis which has shaken the foundations of the economic and social security of several old EU member states. And as polls are showing just days ahead of European elections, the crisis has challenged the perspective of EU Enlargement for the future.

We understand that in difficult moments, enlargement fatigue kicks in. But we are also clear in our belief that without a fully integrated South-East Europe, there are no sound parameters of stability and security in the European Union itself. Recent troubling developments in Ukraine are only a simple and a clear reminder of that.

This year has witnessed a very good progress in parliamentary cooperation in South East Europe (SEE), which is confirmed by the concrete steps taken towards the institutionalization of the parliamentary cooperation in our region.

The establishment of our Parliamentary Assembly is a clear indication of the new approach being applied across our region and we are confident that this new platform will be a substantial contribution towards fostering systematic cooperation among our parliaments and our governments.

Preparations for EU membership for national parliaments represent a particular challenge, as an extensive batch of EU legislation has to be transposed into national legislation in a short period of time. Some of you have already passed this phase. Some of us rely on your expertise and support along this process.

The need for parliamentary exchanges with other partners in the region in terms of promoting and sharing best practices and experiences has now become an important aspect of regional cooperation, and I believe that the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly will play a very important role in this context.

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I would like now to express our gratitude and praise the invitation of our Romanian hosts to Kosovo's delegation. Although we value the presence of Kosovo as Special Guests in Bucharest as a very important and meaningful step ahead, Albania believes that guided by the principle of all-inclusiveness, we should all find the necessary consensus to ensure that Kosovo becomes a full member of the SEECP soon.

The advancing of the Belgrade-Prishtina Dialogue, the full implementation of their agreement and the inclusiveness of Kosovo in all regional initiatives, will be a concrete contributor towards stability and further economic development for all of us. Albania will always be supportive.

Allow me to congratulate my Romanian colleague Mr. Zgonea and his team of the Romanian Parliament for the huge efforts and work put during the past year, which has culminated today with the inauguration of this Parliamentary Assembly. My compliments for the wonderful organisation of this meeting and the hospitality you have shown to us.

I would like to underline that Albania pays double attention to this meeting, taking into account our upcoming Presidency of the SEECP which starts next month.

In ending, Let me assure you that the Albanian Parliament will use the Chairmanship-in-Office during the next year, to further advance the fruitful work done so far by our Romanian colleagues, and I can reconfirm our strong commitment to fulfil all obligations which derive from our Joint Declaration today, in ensuring that all logistical tasks are accomplished and that the Parliamentary Assembly takes shape during the Albanian Presidency.

Thank you again and congratulations.