



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

MESSAGE

delivered by Ambassador Anda Filip

**on behalf of Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, President of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), on the occasion of
the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of
the Southeast European Cooperation Process
(Bucharest, 9-11 May 2014)**

It is a great pleasure to be here today on such a momentous occasion – the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Southeast European Cooperation Process – and to present a message of congratulations on behalf of the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I am all the more honoured as this historic event is taking place in my home city of Bucharest.

For the past 15 years, the Southeast Cooperation Process has been playing a major role in fostering close ties of good neighbourliness among the countries of the region. It has allowed these countries to share experiences and good practices; it has assisted them in overcoming similar challenges in their transition process; and it has helped to forge solidarity and cooperation in building a common future as part of the European community of free, democratic and prosperous nations.

It is therefore only natural that today their cooperation at the parliamentary level should be formalized, through the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the SEECP. This development is also very much in keeping with the growing role of parliaments at the regional and international levels.

Some of you may know that the Inter-Parliamentary Union is celebrating this year its 125th anniversary. When the IPU was first created in 1889, it was the first political international organization. It was founded on the notion that disputes and disagreements, whether within or between States, should be solved peacefully through political dialogue and compromise. In those early years, there were very few parliamentary organizations. It was only after the Second World War that international parliamentary organizations of a new kind started to flourish. Many of them were created to accompany regional inter-governmental organizations, as was the case of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, established in 1949. However, it has been mostly over the past 25 years that we have seen an exponential growth, with over 120 international parliamentary structures, both formal and informal, regional and thematic, in existence today.

Over the years, we have seen how international parliamentary cooperation can foster confidence and cooperation, ensure greater coherence in legislation and national practices, and help to translate international commitments undertaken by States into national realities. We have also witnessed parliamentary diplomacy at work, helping to overcome what at times appear to be insurmountable challenges. It was parliamentarians from the East and the West, meeting at the IPU in the 1960s at the height of the Cold War, who initiated the Helsinki process on security and cooperation in Europe. It was MPs and political representatives from both the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus that helped open a political dialogue on the island. And it was parliamentarians who first drew international attention to the widespread and

devastating harm caused by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, passing national legislation categorically prohibiting these weapons of terror, and ultimately paving the way for the 1997 global Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Today, Southeast Europe is again confronted with a major crisis, this time occurring in its immediate vicinity. We are reminded again, painfully so, that the vestiges of the Cold War are far from over. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Southeast European Cooperation Process can play an important role in seeking to defuse tensions and pursuing the only acceptable route, one of dialogue and consultation among the parties concerned.

As for the IPU, it is looking forward to working closely with the newly-established SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, among other things by carrying out joint activities in the region as we do in many other parts of the world. This region has much to contribute to the global parliamentary community. We very much hope that in the not too distant future it will join the group of Associate Members and Permanent Observers to the IPU. There, the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly will find a unique forum to interact with representatives not just from national parliaments the world over, but also from most regional parliamentary organizations. It will have the opportunity to engage on the major global issues of our day, and help bridge the gap between the global, the regional and the national levels.

Let me give you just one example. The international community today is focusing on the elaboration of a new set of development goals that will define what all countries in the world have to accomplish in terms of sustainable development over the next 15 to 20 years. If these are to be effective, parliaments will need to be involved both in the design of these new commitments, as well as in their implementation – through legislation, budgets and oversight. Regional parliamentary organizations, evidently, will be called upon to play a pivotal role.

We believe that the shortcomings in implementing the MDGs can in no small measure be ascribed to a lack of transparency, accountability and effective decision-making. Taken together, these values strike at the very core of what is commonly referred to as “democratic governance”, the marriage of democratic principles with sound and effective decision-making and implementation. Seen from this perspective, democratic principles, values and institutions – including strong and effective legislatures - should underpin the post-2015 development framework. Not all Governments share this perspective – this is one very important reason why parliaments and parliamentary organizations can and should be taking the lead in promoting the notion that a comprehensive goal related directly to democratic governance should be part and parcel of the new development framework that will guide all of our work for many years to come.

IPU has been taking the lead in helping to mobilize parliamentary action at the national and regional levels, and we very much hope that the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly will join us in these efforts.

In conclusion, allow me to once again congratulate all the Parliaments of the region on the establishment of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in your important work ahead.

Thank you.