

**Address by Sven Sester,  
Chairman of the Economics, Energy and Innovation  
Committee of the Baltic Assembly,  
at the Inaugural Session of the SEECP  
Parliamentary Assembly  
*10 May 2014, Bucharest***

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am very pleased for the opportunity to participate in the historical Inaugural Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process and to convey the most heartfelt congratulations from the Baltic Assembly.

This moment is significant, and it attests to the readiness of countries in the South-eastern Europe to take a common path, to jointly address problems, as well as to increase the competitiveness of the region and the welfare of people together.

In the Baltic Assembly we have learned that regional cooperation is a powerful tool for meeting the challenges, solving the issues and representing regional interests on a global level. And I truly hope that your decision to found this Parliamentary Assembly will also lead to efficient cooperation, sustainable regional development and stability.

Dear colleagues,

The Baltic States have been working together for more than 20 years now. During this time, we have learned and achieved a lot. We have invested our efforts in developing our countries, in refining our cultures and languages and in securing our independence.

Our overarching goals were to ensure that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia regain the rightful place in the family of European nations, as well as that our restored nation states guarantee independence, security and freedom of expression and development guaranteed to us and the next generations. And we already bear fruits of our cooperation – we are equal and full-fledged members in the European and transatlantic communities.

Dear colleagues,

Regional cooperation is based on trust that manifests itself in diverse aspects, matters and ways. This trust is like a neighbour, who assists in times of hardship, helps to strike a balance between national and regional interests and gives advice when needed. Modern world is closely interconnected. We are not alone, and we must not act in isolation by ignoring others because complex issues require joint response. The Baltic States know the truth behind the words said by US President Woodrow Wilson in January of distant 1918 “We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.”

Colleagues,

The distance between our regions is by no means an obstacle for strengthening our relations in future, and I am confident that despite this distance we regard ourselves as neighbours and key partners.

And I would like to assure you once again that we – the Baltic States – are open for cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process.

Thank you!