



*Republic of Serbia
National Assembly*

**INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE
SEE COOPERATION PROCESS PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

9 – 11 May 2014, Bucharest

"Future role of SEECP Parliamentary Assembly in the European framework"

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished colleagues,

It is my great honour and privilege to take part in launching the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, at this historic moment for our region. I would like to greet you on behalf of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and to thank the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP for their commitment and efforts invested in the course of the previous year. This is, at the same time, a special opportunity to recognize the achievements of the previous period, all aspects, prospects and possibility for further promotion of cooperation.

I would like to take this opportunity to underline that the South East Europe Cooperation Process is an authentic initiative, which will, in the form of the Parliamentary Assembly, as a supreme institutional form of cooperation, represent the specific "voice of the region" and contribute to better good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation among our twelve countries.

Today our region is involved in quite a number of multilateral initiatives, starting from those having general political importance to those dealing with sectorial forms of cooperation. Still, in addition to that, there is a huge room for further joint activities, which we will continue to pursue with the assistance of Regional Cooperation Council, in the priority areas: economic and social development, energy and infrastructure, judiciary and internal affairs, security, strengthening of human resources. It is important, in cooperation with the governments, to identify projects of common interest for the states of the region and to make room for their realization by linking them to the European Commission plans, especially within the multi-beneficiary programming component of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

In my personal opinion, SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, by further development of regional cooperation, will contribute to the European prospects of the candidate countries and potential candidates for membership, especially through continued exchange of experience with EU member states.

The parliaments of our countries, through this Parliamentary assembly initiatives, can, also, give a significant contribution to creation of better economic conditions in the region.

Apart from boosting economic cooperation and linking economies, it is important, together with the governments, to pursue creation of better business environment and attracting foreign investments by adopting legislation, particularly in the field of the rule of law and countering corruption, and to proceed further with supervision of the implementation of regulations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a Vice-Speaker of the National Assembly I would like to emphasize the importance of joint work on promotion of cultural, economic and political ties; overcoming the legacy of the past and building the relations that will be well suited to the future challenges; through dialogue and development of new spirit of cooperation.

The fact that all the countries in the region decided to join the EU, necessitates fundamental reforms that we should undertake and establishing of a new value system. Aware of the fact that each individual country development is carried out through regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations, we are proud to be the part of such important regional developments, especially of the Central Europe Free Trade Agreement – CEFTA, Agreement on the Energy Community for South Eastern Europe, and to participate in the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and protocols on cooperation in the field of judiciary and internal affairs.

It is important that the Parliamentary Assembly we establish today, will give its contribution, in the forthcoming period, towards better coordination between the EU and the SEE region, through cooperation with the European parliament and the EU institutions and exchange of experience with EU member states on a broad range of issues related to EU enlargement agenda and regional cooperation and with other parliamentary foras and institutions in Europe.

It is also necessary to provide support of the EU member states and international organizations for the common interests of the region, particularly through the pre-accession activities funds and assistance in the European integration process.

It is quite natural that cooperation with the neighbours represents a key aspect of strengthening relations with the European Union, and we believe that it is also a priority interest of our neighbours. And when taking into consideration economy, trade, infrastructure, the environment, security, transportation, culture, tourism, every sphere of life naturally directs us towards our neighbours, since all these areas are linked and one cannot act in any of them individually. It is very important that the countries of the region cooperate in the harmonization of legislation, adoption of common stances, and in taking the common positions before the European institutions, especially in those spheres which will provide better quality of life for the citizens. It is particularly necessary to strengthen economic ties, since with the support of economic subjects we will build the region of economic prosperity, which is a prerequisite for the establishment of lasting stability in the region.

Republic of Serbia has an interest in further improvement of regional cooperation and joint finding solution for all outstanding issues and problems for the purpose of increasing security, stability and prosperity. We will continue to do so in the framework of this organization, needless to say, in line with constitutional and legislative regulations of our state and clear rules of this organization.

National Assembly is interested in all the more intensive sharing of parliamentary experience and best practices. This is a process demanding daily work and consultations and I am confident that, by efforts and self-sacrificing work in future, we will be successful in making up for the delay of the region as concerns the European integration, to consolidate foundations of democracy and piece in the region and give our contribution to the economic development and prosperity.

We, Members of Parliaments, discuss different issues of importance for the citizens of our countries, of importance for the EU integration process, aiming for better mutual understanding, recognizing common interests and finding the best solutions for outstanding issues. It is necessary to intensify the cooperation with the European parliament, and other institutions of the European Union, parliaments of the EU member states, but with the parliaments of other countries of the region, too. Cooperation within the framework of SEECP Parliamentary assembly will give additional momentum to the cooperation of the parliaments in the region, and which is conducive to other forms of cooperation among our countries.

Honourable colleagues, I would like to underline on this occasion that the National Assembly will continue to actively participate in the operation of the newly established SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, as it did so far, and that it will be a constructive partner in the region. Being a state which started EU membership negotiations, we remain devoted to the reform path, convinced that the path of democracy, prosperity, social development, human rights and fundamental freedoms protection is a path which has no alternative.

Finally, I would like to underscore that establishing the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly is a big step forward and I would like to invite you, distinguished colleagues from the region, to work more intensively together in future and all the more intensively on integrating our region in the EU.

Thank you very much!