



THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE SEECF PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

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Address by the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament
Mr. Vangelis MEIMARAKIS,
Chair of the PABSEC during the Inaugural Session of the
SEECF
Parliamentary Assembly

Honorable Mr. President,

Distinguished Representatives of International and
Regional Organisations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my twofold capacity as Chair of the Parliamentary
Dimension of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the
European Union, but also as Chair of the PABSEC during
the first semester of 2014, I consider my participation in
today's conference as occurring in very favorable
circumstances. Just two days from today, Athens is

hosting the 43th Parliamentary Assembly Baltic Sea Economic Cooperation Plenary. Given the membership of many countries both in the PABSEC and the new SEECP PA, these days we are offered the possibility to discuss in detail our cooperation prospects in the broader region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 1993- the year of foundation of the parliamentary dimension of member-states cooperation in the Black Sea broader region- until today, the PABSEC has presented significant achievements to the international community, thus proving its sustainability and importance. It has gone through a long course, evolving into a dynamic interparliamentary forum, aiming at providing political and legislative support to regional cooperation projects undertaken in its frame.

Today we are in the pleasant position to inaugurate the establishment of a new Parliamentary Assembly, -that of the 12 SEECP Parliaments-, aiming at further deepening its member states' cooperation, friendship and collaboration.

At this point, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that only a few years ago, parliamentary diplomacy used to be a minor dimension of international diplomacy and bilateral cross-state relations. Today, the parliamentary diplomacy's contribution to the resolution of local and regional issues, consolidation of democracy, sustainable economic, social and cultural development, security and stability, enjoys broad recognition by all countries.

Greece, as, of course, and many other countries in the region, yields, in practice, of particular importance to strengthening parliamentary diplomacy that can work as a deterrent crisis and tensions in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout PABSEC's longstanding course, we have adopted and submitted proposals on the materialization of common projects in various fields such as energy, rural development, the environment, infrastructure, tourism and the information society.

In the same way, the SEE cooperation process is playing a leading role in strengthening the bonds among Western Balkan countries and amplifies the accession course perspective of those countries that are not yet EU members. Moreover, it encourages the adoption of best practices in dealing with threats such as the organized crime, terrorism and extremism, as well as the undertaking of joint action in the fields of economy, education and culture.

Still, a spectrum of numerous opportunities and possibilities lies ahead; their full utilization, by means of the new Parliamentary Assembly, shall greatly contribute to our joint aspirations' effective fulfillment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the EU and the international community in general are faced with great challenges. Geopolitical developments, as being formed in the EU's direct surroundings are a source of concern for us, as witnessing a climate of instability and turmoil extending from Ukraine, situated at the EU eastern borders, to the northern coasts of Africa, which is our southern neighborhood. The implications of these unstable conditions are diverse, negatively affecting the broader region's economy and security.

A century has passed since the beginning of the 1st world war. This tragic anniversary, in the year 2014, can be viewed as an opportunity to look back in time for an overview and assessment: a simple comparison of the 20th century's first half to its second half will certainly reveal that the gifts of peace, democracy, security and prosperity could never be taken for granted in this part of the world.

Our response to that reality lies in closer cooperation, coordination and readiness both at the political and the diplomatic level.

With these thoughts, I wish for success to the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly, which we will have the opportunity to debate upon in detail shortly.

Thank you.