

**SPEECH BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, LJUBLJANA,
DR. MILAN BRGLEZ AT THE 4TH PLENARY SESSION OF SEECP PA
Zagreb, 10 June 2017**

**Contribution to debate
»Connection – Cooperation – Communication: the way forward«**

Dear Chairperson,
Esteemed colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to start by warmly thanking the Parliament in Zagreb for the excellent organisation of the conference and, in particular, for the generous hospitality we have been enjoying here.

History teaches us – also through many bitter experiences – that Southeast Europe is a region where the key stakeholders should make a genuine effort to achieve political, economic and security stability. The developments in recent years alone convince us that the path to ensuring security and stability is paved specifically by connection, cooperation and, sadly, often seemingly undervalued need for proper communication.

In the circumstances of complex interdependence – both among the players within the countries and in international relations – close regional connection is more important than ever before. The parliamentary dimension of the SEECP, which since its beginnings has grown into a Parliamentary Assembly with the ambition to become the most influential regional parliamentary organization, can certainly represent the right platform to meet the demanding challenges in Southeast Europe. The countries in the region indeed have the best knowledge of all the historical, social, cultural, economic and other relevant circumstances, and only we are able to find the best solutions to the common issues. The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly is therefore the right forum to enhance the dialogue among all of us. This is our framework, but we will still need to add the content.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is time to assess, with sufficient critical reflection, the path we have walked and set together the goals we aspire to achieve.

To my opinion, the dynamics of the development of the Parliamentary Assembly lags behind the challenges of our time, which is why an earliest possible establishment of the Permanent Secretariat is highly necessary. The operation of some other regional parliamentary organizations has in fact shown that an organization can be pervasive and successful only when its structure is based on a constant and well-established institutional architecture. The Permanent Secretariat would thus bring the much-needed professional and skilled staff who would focus their knowledge and energy on searching for suggestions and solutions to all those issues that we will set at the political level as being of priority for the region.

I have been drawing attention to this, dear colleagues, for the third consecutive year already. However I regret to note that we have not made a sufficient step forward in such regard.

In view of the hitherto developments, I believe that we need a compromise solution as regards the seat of the Permanent Secretariat, since the current dichotomy between two proposals does not benefit anyone and, more so, hinders the work and the development of the Parliamentary Assembly.

I therefore reiterate my personal call and suggestion – which I have already highlighted at last year's plenary session – that the Parliaments of Ankara and Sofia prepare and present their own compromise solutions that could pave a way out of the stalemate. In doing so, it would be of great help having an idea of Sofia's and Ankara's position as to the conditions under which any of the two parliaments would be willing to give up hosting the seat of the Permanent Secretariat. And if we have written in the Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly that key decisions would be adopted by consensus, the softening of positions and searching for new ways is necessary and inevitable. Insisting on opposite banks can simply not bring a solution.

Dear Chairperson, dear colleagues,

Let me remind you once again that only we, the parliamentarians, within the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly, have the opportunity to make the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly the driving force of development and progress in the region. Let us show unity and willingness to compromise, and let the activity of the Parliamentary Assembly set an example of mutual cooperation and respect for the good of every single one of our countries and, hence, the region as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.