

**INTERVENTION AT THE FOURTH PLENARY SESSION OF SEECP PA
(8-10 JUNE 2017, ZAGREB)**

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**ESTEEMED SPEAKERS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
DEAR GUESTS OF THE FOURTH PLENARY SESSION,
COLLEAGUES,**

Allow me to address the highest forum of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and to share with you some ideas and thoughts coming from my long experience of being part of the cooperation processes in the region since 2010. I will speak now as an expert who has attended all the meetings and events when the goals and objectives of regional parliamentary interaction and multilateral relations have been outlined and discussed. So I can say that I witnessed and participated in the whole process of establishment and development of the SEECP PA which was not so smooth and easy but was full of expectations and ideas.

Since the Regional secretariat has been created as a focal point for parliamentary cooperation activities in SEE it naturally became a kind of a front office that responded to all requests and proposals aiming at strengthen the connection between SEE parliaments themselves but as well with all regional stakeholders and international partners. And the main conclusion that I drew from my communication with different regional and international organizations, with civil society, academia, youth is that there are plenty of opportunities for actions that could bring tangible results for the region and its citizens. Those actions are not bound to investing of big money or efforts but to responding to partnership proposals and being united around common priorities.

I will give you some examples which in my opinion could be a food for thought whether SEECP PA could enlarge its operation beyond the mandatory committee meetings and Plenary sessions.

The first example is related to the support that was offered to our Assembly from European Union institutions. The report on regional cooperation in SEE which European Commission has assigned and sponsored aimed at outlining their most reliable partners in the region. This report as you may remember pointed out the SEECP PA as the leading regional organization which was a big recognition for all our parliaments' efforts. And I want to reassure you that this report was taken very seriously by our European partners – it was discussed on different levels including the European parliament. But more than that there was a significant funding that was allocated to support our Assembly activities. The only condition was that it will be given for a project that will be of a mutual importance for all the SEECP parliaments. At a Conference in Sofia

in November 2015 this opportunity was discussed and me my self during my conversations with non-governmental organizations and experts taking part in this Conference I was glad to hear from them that they are willing to support the drafting and implementation of such a project. Unfortunately this good idea did not find a great resonance in Assembly's debates and decisions. It could seem maybe too ambitious but in my opinion worth to try.

As continuation of those reflections I would like to pay due attention to the variety of regional initiatives, organizations and experts with whom the Regional secretariat has established relations and partnerships. And I will not be tired to repeat that it is a huge resource that our Assembly might use and introduce in its activities. Just a little example here – at a meeting of WB and Turkey parliamentary coordinators with the Pre-accession actions unit of the European Parliament which I attended last September in Belgrade, one of the main concerns was how to raise the quality of the debates during the conferences organized by the EP in the region. Than I proposed to my European colleagues to invite at each topical conference as moderators or lecturers representatives of regional organizations because they are the ones that gather the expertise on the region and have the full knowledge of what is going in each country and in the region as a whole. I'm happy that they accepted that proposal and I saw with satisfaction the number of regional organizations included in those conferences' agenda. I strongly believe that this approach could be beneficial for our Assembly as well. More then that I informed colleagues from European Parliament about Sofia declaration conclusions on strengthening cooperation between our two organizations and they are eager to invite SEECP PA representatives to take part in all their events. So now it is up to us to be proactive and to contribute with SEECP PA experience.

Last but not least the Regional Secretariat activities are closely related to establishing contacts with our partner parliamentary organizations. Here I would like to thank the Baltic Assembly through its representatives here for being the first to offer its experience and to organize a visit of SEE parliamentarians to Tallinn in order to help us in our institutionalization efforts. But there are also a lot of support and opportunities for cooperation with IPU, PABSEC, PAM, Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, Union for the Mediterranean, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and so on.

I will conclude my intervention with a hope to see the SEECP PA further developing as leading and most effective parliamentary format in the region but as well as an institution that is ready for creating networks, partnerships and own initiatives which will bring added value to political decisions and debates.