



THIRD PLENARY SESSION OF THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

10-11 JUNE 2016, SOFIA

FINAL DECLARATION

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the Charter of Good Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP,

Following the Inaugural Declaration of SEECP PA, adopted in May 2014 in Bucharest and the Final Declaration of May 2015, adopted in Tirana,

Led by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP PA governing the functioning of the SEECP PA,

Noting that the year 2016 marks the 20th anniversary of the launching of SEECP, which consistently affirms its role as the leading political format of cooperation in the region, factor of security, stability and prosperity,

Noting that increasing the intensity and the institutionalization of parliamentary dialogue is key to addressing the manifold challenges facing the region and to projecting the creation perspective for the development of Southeast Europe,

Reaffirming the importance and the role of parliaments in actively contributing to the promotion of the further enlargement of the European Union encouraging the exchange of expertise and experience with SEECP parliaments of non EU Member States,

Appreciating the increase of the visibility of SEECP among the EU institutions as an important factor for the successful European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the SEE region,

Highly appreciating the initiated dialogue for further strengthening the cooperation between SEECP PA and the European Parliament as an important step towards the realization of the priorities of the Assembly,

Noting the importance of deepening the relations of SEECP PA with citizens of the region and especially with young people as a guarantee for the promotion and implementation of democratic reforms and increasing the efficiency and transparency in the work of the Assembly,

Welcoming the reports and confirming the Resolutions of the General Committees on Economy, Energy and Infrastructure, and Social Affairs, Education, Science and Research,

SEECP PA:

1. Calls on the SEECP parliaments to work actively for the development of the SEECP PA into a wide platform of parliamentary cooperation promoting the formulation and implementation of EU relevant policies based upon lessons learned and best practices of SEECP participants,

2. Expresses its full support for the efforts made by the non EU Member States, to bring their legislative framework in line with EU law and welcomes the progress they have achieved in this regard,

3. Calls on the EU and the SEECP PA participants to combine their efforts for a more active communication aimed at mobilizing the

political and public support for the necessary reforms ensuring long-term stability, democracy, rule of law, prosperity and good neighbourly relations,

4. Welcomes the meeting held on March 21, 2016 between SEECP PA and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament as a first step in the efforts to build continuous cooperation between SEECP PA and EP,

5. Calls on SEECP PA and the EU Parliament to continue to develop their cooperation towards building a sustainable mechanism of interaction and welcomes the opportunities for joint activities outlined at the above-mentioned meeting:

- **regular discussions or relevant debates** on various topics in order to support and accelerate the process of EU accession of the SEECP participants,
- **annual exchange of views** with representatives of the SEECP PA during one of the meetings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament during the Spring session or before the presentation of countries specific reports,
- **ad-hoc participation** of MEPs in the activities of the SEECP PA including Plenary sessions, hearings and other events, including on issues of mutual interest in their agenda,
- **exchanging information** and expertise between SEECP PA and the European Parliament/Committee on Foreign Affairs,
- **inviting representatives of the SEECP PA** to events /conferences, seminars, etc./ organized by the Directorate for Democracy Support of the European Parliament in Brussels and in the countries engaged in the enlargement process or pursuing reforms for advancing on the European path.

6. Acknowledging that international protection should be insured for those in need, while at the same time respecting the dignity and

human rights of migrants not in need of international protection, calls on the European institutions and the SEECP PA participants to work together to curb migration pressure in Europe through strengthening the regional dialogue and cooperation with the full involvement of the most affected countries in the region in the efforts to find a commonly acceptable solution, by attaching particular importance to effective border management, access to legally safe and efficient asylum procedures while ensuring a fair burden-sharing system, to the implementation of existing commitments in dealing with migration and the effective implementation of readmission agreements,

7. Highlights the need to deal effectively with terrorism and violent extremism, and calls for action in accordance with international law against those who sponsor or provide support to terrorist groups or harbour them,

8. Calls for a regular exchange of information and opinions between parliaments of the SEECP regarding current issues on the international political agenda and for producing and publishing common positions of the Assembly,

9. Supports the role of the SEECP parliaments in the facilitation and implementation of the relevant EU legislation related to macro-regional strategies that underlie effective cross-border cooperation and the development of leading infrastructure projects,

10. Emphasizes the need to raise citizens' awareness and participation in strengthening the cooperation in Southeast Europe, as well as strengthening people to people contacts, particularly among young people in the region as a bridge between different nations and cultures,

11. Highly appreciates the active participation in the essay contest "Young people from SEE for prosperity of the region" and is committed to further support projects and initiatives in the field of youth policies, education and university cooperation,

12. Confirms that, until having a fully functional Secretariat and an operational budget, the parliament holding the Chairmanship-in-

Office of the SEECP PA shall serve, with assistance of the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe, as an ad hoc Secretariat for the Plenary Session, the Standing Committee, the President and the Bureau of the Assembly while the parliament holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or of an Ad hoc Working Group shall also fulfill the tasks of an ad hoc Secretariat for the respective body of the Assembly,

13. Recommends that the next Presidency and the Bureau of the Assembly will continue to actively work towards achievement of the priorities of the organization, and in particular on the joint consultations for further strengthening cooperation between SEECP PA and the EP and for promoting European integration of the region, as well as political association and economic integration,

14. Recommends to the next Presidency to achieve continuity in terms of visibility of the PA and its opening to the citizens of the region.