

**THE STATEMENT OF MR. MEHMET AKİF HAMZAÇEBİ, VICE SPEAKER OF  
THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**AT THE 4TH PLENARY OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION  
PROCESS PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (SEECP PA)**

**(10 June 2017 Zagreb)**

Esteemed Speakers of Parliaments

Distinguished Colleagues

Dear Guests,

I am pleased to be in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, a friendly and allied country. I want to thank the host country Croatia for warm hospitality shown to us and members of our delegation.

South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) is the unique cooperation forum as the example of regional ownership which reflects the common will and authentic voice of the Balkan countries.

I am very pleased to come together with distinguished colleagues on the occasion of the 4th Plenary Session of the South East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary Assembly, to which Turkey has effectively contributed.

Dear Participants,

It is our common responsibility to ensure security, stability, peace and prosperity in Balkans which harbor great potential in every field. In this regard, I believe that we must draw relevant lessons from past conflicts and divisions and develop cooperation and solidarity among us.

We believe that current challenges can be overcome by the integration of all Balkan countries with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. It is necessary to make the most of regional dialogue and cooperation mechanisms as South East European Cooperation Process in this process. I sincerely believe that our parliaments will do their full share of work in this regard.

It is not only the shared past and the values but also our common vision towards the future that bonds all of us together. The orientation of Balkan countries towards European and Euro Atlantic institutions constitutes an important anchor for regional peace and stability. Within this framework, we support the integration perspective of the Balkan countries with European Union and NATO and underline the necessity to continue the reforms in our region on all occasions.

In this regard, we are very glad to witness our friendly country Montenegro to become a member of NATO recently. As you all know, Turkey has ratified the protocol regarding the membership of Montenegro to NATO and became one of the first countries that ratified this protocol despite the insidious attack on our nation and Parliament last year. Montenegro's

membership to NATO not only brings a valuable and strategic partner to our alliance but also a confirmation of the continuation of the Open Door Policy of NATO.

On the other hand, we sincerely hope that the integration of Macedonia to the EU and NATO be also realized by the solution of the name problem that was brought as an obstacle in front of this country for many years. On this occasion, we wish all the success to the newly formed government in our friendly and brotherly country Macedonia in their endeavors to carry this country to a better future in peaceful, calm and united manner.

Dear Participants,

EU membership should be the ultimate goal of all Balkan countries. We welcome the positive developments in the recent period in this regard as important milestones as far as the future of our region and Europe is concerned.

Without giving too much detail, I want to emphasize that we welcome the positive steps taken by Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina one by one in their paths toward full membership to the EU since our meeting last year.

Esteemed Speakers of Parliaments

In the first part of my speech, I have concentrated on the positive developments in our region in the last year. However, we have to underline the fact that each and every country in our region also faced serious challenges in the same period and that the relative peace and stability is fragile more than ever.

Terrorism in its various forms has become a more serious and insidious threat. International cooperation in all levels is essential in tackling this problem.

Illegal immigration has affected all countries, especially the Balkan countries in a more direct manner and left our governments in a difficult situation. I believe that the extraordinary effort shown by Turkey is being appreciated by everybody in this regard. Nevertheless, I want to underline that the support and solidarity shown by the international society falls well short of our expectations.

On the other hand, governments that are responsible to cope with these serious problems unfortunately fall victim to political turmoil in many countries and the relevant decisive steps cannot be taken due to early elections, dissolved coalitions and long technocratic or temporary governments.

At this point, parliaments, as essential building blocks of our democracies, should play a more important role. As no one can find a solution to these kinds of international problems alone, it is really important for the shared future of our region to further develop the existing partnership and cooperation among our parliaments.

Distinguished Participants,

We wish to put the consensus built on establishing a Permanent Secretariat for the South East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary Assembly into reality without undue delay anymore. The parliamentary dimension, being one of the determining factors in order that

regional cooperation gives permanent results in long term, will have confirmed its functionality with the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat.

That South East European Parliamentary Assembly has a Permanent Secretariat will transform our contribution to our regional integration efforts and the integration processes with Europe into permanent acquisitions in long term by strengthening our institutional identity.

We support that this issue is to be handled in a more constructive dialogue in the coming period and hope that a decision is to be taken during the Slovenian Chairmanship in Office.

Distinguished Colleagues,

I want to thank our hosts Croatia once again for their hospitality and greet esteemed speakers of parliaments and all the participants with respect.