

Parliamentary Conference “Building democratic security in the Mediterranean: common challenges, shared responsibility”, Hotel Excelsior Conference Hall, Dubrovnik, 6 November 2018 - Address by Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Gordan Jandroković

Esteemed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Madam Pejčinović-Burić, Esteemed Members of the Croatian Parliament, Esteemed Mayor of Dubrovnik, Mr. Franković, Dear guests,

I welcome you wholeheartedly on behalf of the Croatian Parliament and in my personal name. I especially welcome the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Madam Liliane Maury Pasquier, the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Madam Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, the President of the Venice Commission Mister Gianni Buquicchio and all members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. I also extend a warm welcome to our colleagues from the parliaments of the Southern Mediterranean countries. It is a pleasure to welcome you all.

I am pleased that today's conference on the cooperation among states from the „northern“ and „southern“ coasts of the Mediterranean is held here in Dubrovnik and that with it we are concluding the parliamentary dimension of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. Due to Croatia's geographic position, history and cultural heritage, „Mediterraneanism“ is an essential element of our identity. Our broader Mediterranean dimension, besides being characterised by the geographic position, is also shaped by the historic continuity of life on the Adriatic Sea, the role the Dubrovnik Republic had over a period of five centuries and, consequently by the influence on the economic, cultural and political development of the wider Mediterranean area.

I am glad that you will have the opportunity to hear more about it during the informal part of this Conference.

Due to this strong Mediterranean feature of its identity Croatia has always been striving to contribute to developing firm ties and cooperation with Mediterranean countries, especially those on the southern coast. Even before we became member of the European Union we had been politically supporting the idea of strengthening the Barcelona Process, which is today the Union for the Mediterranean, and advocating the inclusion of all Mediterranean countries. Allow me to mention here the important role of the Croatian Parliament in the establishment

and work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. As for the Council of Europe, we welcome the fact that it has recognized the need to cooperate with southern Mediterranean countries. We commend the Council's unique approach and its programmes designed to help southern Mediterranean countries strengthen sustainable democratic governance. Here I must highlight the partnership with the European Union and the joint support initiative - the *South Programme*.

Dear colleagues,

For Europe, the Mediterranean region has always been a strategic priority. Due to their position – the three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia – centered around the Mediterranean Sea – have always been predestined to cooperate. The very meaning of the name Mediterranean, deriving from the words *medius* and *terra*, indicates that the role of this sea is to connect these three continents and peoples, making dialogue and cooperation a necessity.

As throughout history, the Mediterranean still deserves and must have a prominent position among European policy priorities because of its strategic political and economic position, particularly in the light of new global challenges. Peace, stability and security in the Mediterranean region are vitally important for Europe. The importance of these aspects is underpinned by the fact that Europe was built on the common desire of countries and peoples to share and jointly promote the same values – peace, freedom, stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights protection, economic progress and prosperity, solidarity, cooperation and togetherness. Europe has been a stable continent for more than sixty years because it upheld these values. Our continent is stable and safe inasmuch as are the neighbouring countries, and hence the need of Europe to support its neighbourhood. Long-term peace and stability may be achieved with what the Council of Europe has recognized as democratic security – reinforcing societies' resilience through efficient and independent judiciary, freedom of expression, freedom of association and strong civil society, stable democratic institutions, inclusive society and democratic citizenship. And therefore, democratic security must be a responsibility shared by all democratic countries.

The Council of Europe has extensive expertise and experience in all the areas mentioned and stands ready to share them with all societies that wish to achieve the standards of developed democracies. We at the parliamentary level can make a significant contribution in bringing about democratic security. Especially we in Croatia are very open to cooperation and sharing our experiences. From the events in the recent past Croatia has gained unique experience with respect to democratic transition. We have demonstrated that the transformation to a country of

democratic security enjoying the company of most developed countries can be achieved within a relatively short period. The democratic transition processes that Croatia has been through, especially in terms of its politics, economy and society, can be beneficial to every country going through similar processes.

In the end, I wish that today's Conference will be an open, substantial and friendly exchange among partners. I am confident that it will provide a solid foundation for further dialogue and cooperation with our southern Mediterranean partners.

Thank you. And enjoy your stay in Dubrovnik.