

*Address of the President of the Republic of Croatia Mr. Ivo Josipovic*

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you here in Dubrovnik on the occasion of the Fall Meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

For the Republic of Croatia OSCE is one of the most important platforms for talks about European and global security. It provides a comprehensive concept of security and a generally accepted set of principles, rules and efficient tools for the prevention of conflicts and the implementation of democratic standards in the OSCE zone of operation.

The strengthening of the dialogue between the parliamentary and operational dimension of OSCE provides an extremely important contribution to this dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this occasion to fully support you and congratulate you on the choice of topic for this gathering. We are indeed faced with “challenges, opportunities and perspectives in the Southeast Europe region”, which are vital elements for peace and security in Europe, and, what I wish to especially highlight, also essential for the Republic of Croatia.

All the processes promoted by OSCE in this area have so far been focused on the rehabilitation of the consequences of the war in this region, reconciliation, reintegration, and assistance in the development of democracy in each individual state. Therefore, I welcome the decision to discuss the future of the peoples in this region and the challenges with which they are faced. Their future is also the future of Europe.

In this sense, I want to underline the commitment of the RC to all the processes that can permanently transform Southeast Europe into a zone of peace, stability and prosperity. I have personally devoted all my energy and a large part of my activities as a statesman precisely to that goal.

The responsibility lies primarily with the peoples and states in the region, but the role of the international community, which must encourage dialogue between the peoples through all available mechanisms and promote reforms and development, is equally indispensable. In this sense, we are appealing in particular to the international community to strengthen the European perspective for the states of Southeast Europe, because we are convinced, led by our own experience, that this is one of the best mechanisms and an undisputed challenge on the path of these nations to a better future.

As the future 28<sup>th</sup> EU Member State, the RC is ready to assume its part of the responsibility and give its full contribution to this process.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to underline that the RC in its brief history made abundant use of the OSCE presence on our territory. OSCE has continuously contributed to the successful resolution of post-war situations and has made a significant contribution to programs in the field of

refugees, reintegration, and the realization of the rule of law in every aspect. The RC is grateful to the numerous members of OSCE field missions that operated in Croatia over the years, as well as to the OSCE Zagreb Mission staff for their assistance and commitment with which they exercised their mandate.

I am firmly convinced that OSCE participant states have recognized the full success of the transformation through which Croatia had gone. Today, a large number of capable civil society organizations are active in Croatia. They are independently monitoring the relevant parts of the implementation of the OSCE mandate. Today Croatia has a responsible judiciary, which has been fully implementing the case law and international standards in force. It is a democratic state in every aspect, which protects individuals' human rights, respects the rights of minorities and special groups, and ensures the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Therefore, we believe that our cooperation with OSCE is a success story and an example of good practice that can also be applied to other states. And it is in this context that now, when we are once again entering a new stage of cooperation, I advocate that it be set on new grounds, and that an innovative project approach be applied, by which, I am sure, we will achieve even greater success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today Croatia is about to sign a treaty on full membership with the EU. After six years of very strict negotiations, during which we have fully incorporated the *acquis* in the Croatian legislation and met all the requirements of Chapter 23, Justice and Fundamental Rights, we may say that we have completed the most important and most difficult stage in our development as an independent and sovereign state.

Croatia will sign the Accession Treaty and thus come only a step away of full-fledged membership of the EU in 2013. This means the achievement of a goal that we have pursued from the very beginning. What remains is the process of ratification, in which the role of many of you in your parliaments will be crucial. Therefore, I invite you to give your constructive contribution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you successful talks and a productive meeting.