



Opening remarks of President Ranko Krivokapic

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As prepared for delivery

Welcome to Montenegro: it is a great pleasure for me to have Montenegro host this Parliamentary Assembly meeting, especially as this is the first meeting since I was elected as President.

Montenegro is a forward-looking and culturally-diverse country. We attach the utmost importance to co-operating with all our neighbors, and of course I include our Mediterranean partners in this. Since independence in 2006, all of us in Montenegro have been on a new journey together. We trust that this journey will soon lead to NATO and EU membership, and I am happy to say that excellent progress has been made in this regard.

Montenegro has always been a cultural bridge between the civilizations of the Mediterranean; between East and West, North and South. This spirit of bridging different cultures and ideas also reflects the ethos of the OSCE. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist from the former Yugoslavia, Ivo Andric, once wrote that of all the things man builds, bridges are the most valuable and the most important. So, with that in mind, we must continue to build bridges: across parliaments, countries and regions.

Given its diversity and history of cultural exchange, I also invite you to discover an answer, in your own way, to the question: “What is Montenegro?”.

As I said upon election in Istanbul, “being from a part of the world that has received and continues to receive so much support from the OSCE, as President I intend to give back to this Organization with energy and dedication to ensure that the PA helps strengthen the OSCE in the field and promote the commitments we have undertaken in our capitals.”

Our success, the success of the OSCE and its participating States, resides to a large extent in its parliamentary dimension. Meetings like this one are essential to helping build support for the Organization in our own countries and to building bridges between nations. During these first three months as president, including in my visits to Poland, Finland, Georgia and Romania, I have often recalled these fundamental concepts.

I also call on you to be active. With all of the many worthwhile resolutions that we agreed to at our Annual Session in Istanbul, we have no shortage of work to do in implementing those recommendations in our home countries. When we meet in our national parliaments and as we gather here in Budva for this Autumn Meeting, I hope that we keep in mind the political commitments we have made as parliamentarians of the OSCE. One of those commitments is to work towards implementing our own recommendations, and I urge you all, dear colleagues, to do so. Through our active participation and input we can make the OSCE an organization of leaders.

OSCE field activities are another key factor of the Organization's relevance. The OSCE Mission to Montenegro was opened on 29 June 2006, only a few days after the Republic of Montenegro became independent and was formally admitted to the OSCE as its 56th participating State. For the last seven years, the mission has been actively engaged in supporting the reform processes in the country needed to achieve the Montenegrin strategic goal of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Yours is a visible demonstration that our success, the success of the OSCE and its participating States, resides in our field activities. I would thus like to reiterate the call made in the Istanbul Declaration to the Ministerial Council to "adopt full, effective and long-term mandates for OSCE field operations". The OSCE would lose much of its relevance if it opts for a lighter field operations footprint on the ground.

During my presidential visits I have also raised the theme of the Helsinki +40 process. We have less than two years before we mark the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in August 2015. The Helsinki +40 process in itself plays the role of an important confidence-building measure aimed not at generating new concerns and conflicts, but at gradually eliminating them through dialogue and joint steps forward. The process strikes a chord today with all the OSCE participating States, but this in itself is not a final achievement.

The OSCE must define more clearly its goals in the process as called for in the Istanbul Declaration. As we stated: "The OSCE PA calls for clarification of the goals and purpose of the Helsinki +40 process by the OSCE Chairmanship, in co-operation with the next two chairmanships, whilst informing the public about the process to increase the level of interest and transparency."

We need to consider how the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly can contribute to the process too, enforcing and promoting its parliamentary dimension. Therefore, I would like to encourage you, my colleagues, as parliamentarians of the OSCE, to add your voice to the Helsinki +40 process.

On this, I would like to mention Ambassador Nothelle's input. Representing the PA in Vienna, he constantly reminds the governmental side about the need to further engage the OSCE parliamentary dimension in the discussion on the future of the OSCE area.

We gather here under the theme "Addressing transnational threats and protecting human rights: the role of the OSCE". Over the past 40 years, threats facing the entire OSCE area have evolved and there is a need to find new ways of countering them. Only through our open deliberations, may we underscore a crucial and cross-cutting matter for the OSCE participating States and the Organization as a whole: the importance of uniting our forces and strengthening co-operation to successfully fight transnational threats and protect human rights.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to our constituents to ensure a robust approach to transnational threats. But of equal importance is that we must not abandon human rights principles and fundamental freedoms in doing so.

Respect for human rights is fundamental in upholding security. It marks us out as completely opposed to those who wish to cause harm to our societies. This potential harm could be the result of terrorism, organized crime or human trafficking, to name but a few examples.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank all those who actively contributed to the Special Debate on Syria we held yesterday. The discussion has been intense and enriching and, I believe, fruitful. The example of successful co-operation between two OSCE participating States, USA and Russia, and the United Nations in counteracting the chemical weapons in Syria should also further inspire our common engagement. This initiative, implemented through coordinated international efforts, is a manifestation of the win-win logic lying at the core of the Helsinki +40 Process.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussion today.