

Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Ms Jadranka Kosor

at the opening of the Fall Meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Dubrovnik, 7 October 2011

Mr. President of the Republic of Croatia,

Mr. Speaker of the Croatian Parliament,

Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Distinguished Members of Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome you here in Dubrovnik, in Croatia, on the occasion of the opening of the Fall Meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I am glad that you have chosen this town as a meeting venue, because Dubrovnik is famous not only for its beauty but also for its historical and cultural heritage, a fact of which Croatia is particularly proud this year when we are marking the 300th anniversary of the birth of one of the most important Croatian and European scientists, Ruđer Bošković.

By choosing Croatia as the host country, you have shown how much you appreciate the constructive role that our country has played in applying and promoting OSCE standards and principles.

At the beginning of July each year, for six years in a row, Dubrovnik has hosted the Croatia Summit where European Prime Ministers, Presidents and other high officials meet to discuss issues that represent a challenge for Europe and our immediate neighborhood.

Therefore, I am pleased by the fact that you have devoted this meeting to the events in Southeast Europe and to the challenges, opportunities and perspectives of this part of Europe. This part of Europe is undergoing a significant transformation and is threading forwards in spite of challenges such as the global and European financial crisis.

It is precisely this Organization of which you are a part that is to a large extent deserving for this transformation and democratic stabilization.

OSCE, although by its definition a regional organization, in terms of the territory it covers and on which it is active, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and in terms of its engagement on the Mediterranean and in Asia, acts far beyond the limits that define this type of organization.

Even though, according to its historical roots, it was a product of the Cold War, in the beginning of the 1990s it was transformed into an active participant of the most significant developments leading to the establishment of peace in the European area.

Central Europe - this area extending from the Baltics to the Adriatic, which disappeared from the political map of Europe after World War II - thanks to OSCE activities has been democratically transformed and consolidated.

There is quite a lot of symbolism in the fact that the OSCE Paris Summit in 1990, when the Parliamentary Assembly was established, brought about such a transformation on the European political stage, that its main document, the Paris Charter - was named the European Constitution, and united Germany appeared for the first time as a signatory on an international document. This also constituted a formal removal of divides in Europe, which had been the result of the end of the war operations in 1945.

The removal of artificial barriers also allowed for the fall of artificial creations which could be sustained only with repression imposed by totalitarian regimes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since being admitted to OSCE membership nearly twenty years ago, Croatia has come a long way: from a country which was a beneficiary of UN peacekeeping missions and the host of a large OSCE operation in the field, burdened with a large number of refugees and displaced persons, Croatia has become the anchor of stability and perspectives for Southeast Europe.

After meeting the stringent criteria for membership and conducting the strictest EU accession negotiations so far, Croatia will sign the Accession Treaty and join the EU on 1 July 2013.

In this way, Croatia is closing and leaving behind for good the chapter of the past and affirming itself as a country with a strong and stable democracy founded on the rule of law, respect for human and minority rights and on meeting its commitments.

By becoming member of the strongest world organizations, the EU and NATO, Croatia has not only achieved its national and strategic goals, but also contributed to the stabilization and europeisation of Southeast Europe.

Although tasks and issues still remain outstanding on the path towards a permanent consolidation of this area, the key to resolving them lies in the countries themselves. The assistance of the international community, although still needed in some countries, can be successfully replaced in others with national or international programs and projects.

A commitment to the building of good neighborly relations, regardless of the tragic past, as well as regional cooperation, may serve as a model for resolving problems in other OSCE areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The contribution OSCE has made to international security is great and irreplaceable. Its flexibility and its capacity of dealing with new challenges, as well as its comprehensive approach to security is the best guarantee for preventing and managing conflicts.

Croatia recognizes the essential role that the Parliamentary Assembly has played in promoting the "Helsinki spirit" both among OSCE participant states and among partners for cooperation.

Europe and the world need relevant OSCE standards, as well as new ideas related to the promotion and exercise of human and minority rights and conflict prevention. In this light, we also appreciate the role of President Efthymiou and Mr Spencer, and their efforts towards strengthening inter-parliamentary dialogue.

We also welcome the election of Croatian MP, Mr Picula as Vice-President of the Assembly, which we also see as recognition of Croatia.

Finally, we wish to stress that 2011 is the year when Croatia also marks the twentieth anniversary of its sovereignty and independence, and when Croatia has definitively returned to Europe. It is also an opportunity to look back at fifteen years of OSCE activities in Croatia and to state that this presence contributed to the transformation of the country from a post-conflict society to full and equal member of the international community. OSCE has successfully completed its work in the Republic of Croatia, and we are very grateful for that.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you successful work.