

## **Remarks by OSCE PA President Christine Muttonen**

2016 Autumn Meeting in Skopje,

Opening Session, 30 September 2016

Dear fellow parliamentarians, dear colleagues, dear friends,

I am honoured and pleased to be here in Skopje and to meet again with all of you and I want to express my special thanks to the Speaker, Mr. Trajko Veljanovski, and the Vice Speaker, Ms. Renata Deskoska, for your warm welcome and for hosting us in this beautiful country.

This year's Autumn Meeting is about confidence-building.

Today and tomorrow we want to explore and discuss what we as parliamentarians can do to strengthen confidence-building measures within the OSCE region. As we do so, it is important to remember that very often one of the most difficult things for our governments to is to take into account the interests of other governments.

Our voters put us into office with the expectation that we look out for their interests. But in today's world a nation's interests are very closely interlinked with those of others, which means: cooperation is a necessity. Without cooperation there is no chance of getting ahead.

No country can ensure its own security just by its own.

Instead, we must promote dialogue and compromise.

We must engage with each other and search for common ground.

We must widen our perspective and see the world not only from our national point of view but also through the eyes of our neighbours, partners and even opponents.

This is how we build confidence and ultimately replace the threat of conflict with long-term stability.

This is the only way, dear colleagues, how we effectively address issues such as radicalization, terrorism, the challenge of migration and refugees, or even climate change.

Unfortunately we are not there yet.

Our collective response to the migration challenge could have been much better. So far, we have not succeeded in reconciling the interests of security and stability with the rights of migrants and refugees for safety and a humane treatment - and therefore also not with our own high standards which we consider to be part of our values.

So far, we have also failed to address the underlying causes of migration – issues like poverty, political repression conflicts, or as mentioned before, climate change.

These are the issues we must tackle together and address effectively if we hope to contain not only the migration and refugee crisis but also other dilemmas, other developments that may be on the horizon.

Thankfully, we have a model of comprehensive security that can help ensure that our future is one of peace and prosperity rather than instability and insecurity. The principles laid out in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1990 Charter of Paris and other landmark OSCE accords provide a blueprint for real cooperation and dialogue.

We have these agreements, but if we want them to fully develop their potential, we need greater political will, and greater political will we only get through trust and confidence-building.

For this it is essential that we all acknowledge that a European security architecture that doesn't work for *all* of us does not in fact work for *any* of us.

Dear colleagues,

Here in South East Europe, the OSCE has made a real and tangible difference in the lives of so many people. From promoting peace and security to providing support on legal reform and electoral best practices. From police training to facilitating multi-ethnic dialogue, the list of achievements of the OSCE in this region is long and impressive.

This region has shown how much progress can be achieved whenever there is a genuine will to comply with international commitments while simultaneously making the best use of the OSCE and its unique toolbox – including the Parliamentary Assembly itself.

Naturally, some challenges continue to exist and new ones add to the burden. But this is one more reason why we must also live up to our own commitments and renew our collective focus and attention on this region, for the wellbeing of all of us.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to discussing these issues and more at the roundtable tomorrow with representatives of all six OSCE field missions in the region.

Our discussions will focus on, among other things, the development of democratic institutions and human rights in South East Europe and on the invaluable work that the OSCE does on the ground.

I regret that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs will not be delivering a special address here today due to a last-minute development. I travelled to Ankara in August exactly one month after the coup attempt together with a delegation of other senior leaders from the OSCE PA and representatives of the OSCE's governmental branch.

It is one of our basic principles of the OSCE to stay in dialogue even in difficult times, or if you want, especially in difficult times. Dialogue makes it possible to address issues of concern but also promotes mutual understanding. This was to show our support for Turkish democracy, but at the same time to stress Turkey's international commitments especially with regards to human rights. I am confident that by doing so we started a mutually beneficial process.

I thank you all for being here, and again, for the Speaker and the Vice Speaker for your participation today.

I offer the Parliamentary Assembly's sincere gratitude to you, our hosts and especially the staff of the parliament working tirelessly with us, for the excellent organization of this meeting. Your warmth and your hospitality make it very enjoyable to do our work.

And as Mother Teresa, who was born right here in Skopje, once said, "The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it."