

**ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. BÜLENT ARINÇ,  
SPEAKER OF THE TURKISH GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
AT THE EU SPEAKERS CONFERENCE  
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Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Speakers,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Distinguished Chairman and in his person, National Council of the Slovak Republic, and all concerned for the hospitality accorded.

Distinguished Speakers,

The Report prepared by the Working Group on "Interparliamentary Cooperation" is indeed praiseworthy.

We also welcome the successful launching of the IPEX website. It is certain that the website will play an important role in furthering the level of interparliamentary cooperation.

On this occasion, I would like to emphasize with satisfaction that, the contacts and relations between the European Parliament and national Parliaments of EU member and candidate states and the Turkish Grand National Assembly have significantly increased during the last years.

Within the context of interparliamentary relations, I also wish to refer to two separate projects which constitute concrete examples of cooperation between the European Parliament, the Parliaments of the EU member states and the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The first project envisages development of civil society dialogue. The second project aims at strengthening the institutional structure of the Turkish Grand National Assembly through relevant EU funds. Within this project, briefings and legislative training services will be provided by the Consortium of the Parliaments of Hungary and Italy to the members and officials of Turkish Parliament, which has been carrying out important tasks in Turkey's EU membership process.

As the Turkish Grand National Assembly, we have signed cooperation protocols with the Parliaments of 22 countries from various parts of the world. These protocols envisage legislative training, as well as information and expert exchange within the scope of interparliamentary cooperation.

Distinguished Speakers,

This year we have all participated in the activities held in Rome and Florence marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

History of the European Union and the construction of Europe so far is considered as a success story which will pave the way for new achievements. However, the EU is now faced with various challenges also stemming from ever globalizing world, which is well reflected in the recent discussions on the future of Europe.

Turkey, as a country which aims to become member of the EU, closely follows the discussions on the future of Europe. Our country has actively participated in and contributed to the work of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Constitutional Treaty.

Turkey visions the future of the EU as a global actor. But it requires a strategic approach and necessitates concrete action which pragmatically responds to the current universal problems. Europe, and in particular the EU, are equipped with all the essential means to overcome the current challenges and thus have a unique strength. Europe, which combines together peace, stability, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, should not be content with being an economic super power, but must also move along the way to become a global political power.

With the ongoing enlargement process, it is without doubt that the European values and policies will reach more people and broader geographies.

With Turkey's membership, the EU will also be better placed to address many of the current problems encountered on regional and global levels. Turkey's accession to the EU is an important project which transcends the borders of our continent with all its political, economic, cultural and above all strategic consequences.

Turkey's membership to the EU will consolidate peace and stability in Europe. It will also contribute to the spread and implementation of the universal values in the continent and beyond. As a matter of fact, accession of Turkey to the EU will also open new horizons for the EU in its foreign relations. Turkey, as a member of the EU, will also be a catalyst to enable Europe in establishing closer relations with the Middle East, Central Asia, the Balkans and some African regions.

With these feelings and thoughts in mind, I would like to express my sincere respect and best wishes to all participants.

Thank you.