

Opening speech by the Deputy Speaker of the NC SR

Mr ANDREJ HRNČIAR

Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the National Council of the Slovak Republic as the Deputy Speaker to intercede and to inaugurate one of the most important events of the parliamentary dimension of the first Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union - the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union.

Please allow me, my friends, to welcome you in Slovakia, in the heart of Europe.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome you on the ground of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

Welcome to Bratislava, the capital of our country, in the renovated premises of the Bratislava Castle.

The Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union came at a time when the European Union finds itself in an unprecedented situation. The outcome of the referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union put the Slovak Republic before a new challenge – to deal with the departure of a member country of the European Community for the first time in its history.

The result of the British referendum is a challenge for us, but also a moment that requires urgent internal self-reflection in the European Union. We are at historical crossroads of the European integration.

I believe, that we basically only have two options now, we will either continue the fragmentation, or we rally towards a greater cohesion, to unity. Today we need unity more than ever. Today we need a better and clearer European Union for the European citizens.

Based on my personal experience as the Deputy Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, I allow myself to say that we are failing - we are failing at not being able to adequately bring positive benefits of the common European project to our citizens.

That's why we need a Union which brings sustainable solutions; A Union, which delivers tangible results, in terms of real benefits for the economy and its citizens; A Union, which is capable and prepared to increase the standard of living and social standards of its citizens.

We need a Union, which is united, coherent, standard-setting, credible and resistant to internal and external challenges; A Union, which is functional, sets ambitious goals, and is ready to fulfil them without delay; a Union, which strictly follows the rules and principles of its functioning; a Union, which has a long-term vision and perspective.

The circumstances and the nature of this difficult crisis period leads us to a common contribution so the European Union moves from permanent crisis management to a systematic fulfilment of its strategic vision.

As a relatively small member state in Europe, we have set an ambitious goal since the beginning of our Presidency – and that is, to bring the European Union new energy and move it forward. Today, I am convinced beyond any doubt, that we are successfully and gradually fulfilling this goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I strongly hope that the time you will spend in our country will be pleasant and worthwhile. I hope this conference will bring many challenging and meaningful discussions. I believe, that we have prepared a very attractive program that reflects the current and pressing European issues in the economic and financial areas, as well as the challenges that the European Union and its Member States are currently facing. I would like to emphasize in this context, that the Slovak Republic is, and will also remain in any European debate; as it has been so far; a responsible, transparent, predictable and strong partner, and during our Presidency, also an honest broker.

Please, allow me to thank you - first of all, for your attention that you have devoted to my introductory words; and secondly, for your active participation in this event. We appreciate the confidence you have placed in us.

Thank you.