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PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENT**

**THEME 2: DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY
AND SECURITY IN EUROPE**

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Theme 2: Democracy, Sovereignty and Security in Europe

Chaired by Ms Brasseur

The Chair

To introduce our debate I have the pleasure of calling our Danish colleague, Mr Mogens Lykketoft.

Mr Mogens LYKKETOFT , Speaker of the Folketinget, Denmark

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk on this important and interesting theme.

Democracy, sovereignty and security have for centuries been strongly inter-related in a European context. The nation state has been the political institutional framework for the development of democracy in Europe and will, with national parliaments, remain the most important building stone of our democracies. However, history teaches us that the many challenges we face cannot be met by the national framework alone. Some of the most existential challenges for mankind – peace, development, the climate, the environment – can be met efficiently only through strong institutions and frameworks. The United Nations and the Council of Europe have important roles to play. For many of us, NATO is the cornerstone of maintaining regional peace. The European Union is the most advanced and extended example of democratically decided pooling of sovereignty to meet common challenges among 28 countries.

Following the end of the Cold War we had high hopes of finally combining democracy, sovereignty and security. For the first time in history the opportunity seemed within reach to transform Europe as a whole to a peaceful and stable continent of democracies co-operating in regional organisations to secure peace and promote economic development. The Council of Europe and the European Union had admitted several new member states, all eager to meet the commitments of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Today we witness a setback for many of these ideals: corruption scandals, support for far right parties, nationalism, homophobia, hatred against Roma are rising. That is happening not under dictatorships but under democratically elected governments. How did it come to this?

The financial crisis, high unemployment, social problems and austerity policies are all part of the explanation. The social and labour market consequences of digesting a major enlargement of the EU are another factor. Crises make people scared and many do not feel protected by European institutions. At such times, there is a tendency to turn nationalistic – you assume you can trust only your own blood. Nationalistic tendencies are remarkable in many European countries, not only those that have been forced to implement the toughest austerity measures.

That has been illustrated at several national elections in the past couple of years, most distinctly in the results of the European Parliament elections in May, which clearly indicated that popular support for the European project is declining. EU governments must co-operate much better in formulating the right policy answers to fight unemployment here and now and to secure the urgently needed structural reforms. National parliaments have an obligation to facilitate these policies, but we have a special responsibility in fostering a well-informed debate. We can promote discussion through parliamentary debate and questions and hold governments to account. We can hold public hearings, engage independent experts and civil society representatives to improve the debate. National parliaments must play a more active role in European decision making. To this end a number of proposals were put forward by the Danish Parliament and other national parliaments earlier this summer.

National parliaments have the opportunity to be in direct contact with the voters and the responsibility to foster well-informed, nuanced debates on, for instance, nationalism, racism and the rights of minorities.

National parliaments are in particular well qualified and obliged to ensure that citizens do not regard themselves as alienated from decision making in international bodies.

The concepts of democracy, sovereignty and security will also in future remain crucial to a stable and secure Europe. The Council of Europe has since its foundation made valuable contributions in

defending human rights, democracy, sovereignty and the rule of law. But all that progress is threatened by developments in Ukraine right now. The Russian annexations of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine violate Ukrainian territorial integrity in contradiction with international law. It is also in blunt conflict with the 1994 Budapest Memoranda, whereby Ukraine gave up possession of nuclear weapons and all major powers, including Russia, guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. That guarantee was repeated in reaction to the Russian annexation of Crimea by a huge majority in the UN General Assembly in the spring.

In spite of strong warnings from the international community, a war is being fought in eastern Ukraine with support for the separatists coming from Russia. The whole security architecture of the broader Europe is shaken and disturbed by the situation. Co-operation between Russia and the west is breaking down, and sanctions have led to economic warfare. We must urgently restore co-operation between Russia and the west to contain other international conflicts, especially in the broader Middle East.

I sincerely hope that we can reinvent the understanding that across the whole European continent we have strong common interests and that closer co-operation is the precondition for peace and development.

We require renewed regional co-operation under the broader European space that will include Russia and other members of the Eurasian Union and allow Ukraine and other member states of the Council of Europe to co-operate freely both with neighbours in the west and in the east. None of us should view security as a zero-sum play – less to me means more to you, and the other way round. This zero-sum-play politics was exactly why this continent went through the catastrophic World War One 100 years ago. We must not repeat that thinking.

Mr Cemil ÇIÇEK, President of the Grand National Assembly, Turkey

The issue of security in Europe is a very important one. Terrorism, ethnic conflicts, the financial crisis, cyber-attacks, weapons of mass destruction, clandestine immigration are all risks and dangers that have assumed unprecedented proportions and pose a threat to security worldwide.

It is essential for the international community that we should work together and co-ordinate our actions. Turkey lies at the geographical epicentre where, after the Cold War, instability set in. A peace zone needs to be created in the neighbourhood. We in Turkey have a foreign policy geared towards striking a balance between freedom and security. Finding the right balance in this regard is essential for all countries, and for all citizens so that they can live freely. Citizens cannot afford to make compromises here because to do so would hurt them directly. Given the current situation, more emphasis needs to be given to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These are fundamental values that are central to what the Council of Europe does and any future goals must be assessed in the light of these values.

Established in the wake of the Second World War, the Council of Europe is founded on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, values that are of the utmost importance for creating international security. Sadly, there are some people today who are intent on wrecking the European project, and extremist and xenophobic rhetoric is mounting. The outcome of May's European elections and the number of seats won by extremist parties are a real source of concern. We need to remember that the policy of EU enlargement has helped to strengthen peace and security, and that further progress in this area will give new impetus to the European Union, enabling it to once again become a highly respected player.

Before I finish, allow me to return to a number of points. Turkey is eager that the crisis in Ukraine should be settled with due regard to the sovereignty, political unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within the framework of democratic principles and in accordance with international law.

We do not recognise the annexation of Crimea, because it was carried out in breach of international law. The security of the various ethnic groups in Ukraine must not be undermined. We hope that the current negotiations will produce a lasting political solution, and that the international community will support the efforts that have been made in this regard.

The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh remains one of the main obstacles to stability in the south Caucasus. Recent clashes have once again highlighted the need to find a solution to this conflict. Events in Iraq and Syria pose a real threat to international security. It is important that all countries work together to combat terrorism.

Mr Ivan MELNIKOV, First Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, Russian Federation

We in Russia proceed from the principle that Europe is our common home and that the biggest threats to democracy and sovereignty come from the application of double standards, the disconnect between words and actions, and the failure to take the same line with all states.

The danger of this kind of behaviour has been underscored by the crisis in Ukraine. As a member of Parliament, I would draw your attention to the fact that the Russian public is not only disappointed but also deeply distressed to see that Europe's attitude towards events in Ukraine is completely at odds with core European values. After a stop was put to the bloodshed on 22 February, with Poland, Germany and France acting as mediators, a sensible compromise was signed, that offered a peaceful solution to the situation. The very next day, the opposition staged an armed coup d'état against the government. What guarantees did Europe offer then? You talk about the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity but who violated this integrity? It was done from inside. As you know, there are wide differences between the various regions of Ukraine, including even in terms of how they perceive the world.

The Kiev region has been overrun by hard-line nationalists who had been waiting to take revenge since the Second World War, and who carried out their actions, wrapped in the flag of the European Union. Crimea and the south-eastern region, faced with threats to their fundamental rights and even their survival, had to make a choice. The difference between the two regions is that Crimea, thanks to a democratic procedure, was able to see off these threats without any problem whereas south-eastern Ukraine paid a very high price, particularly in Odessa where those who expressed dissent were burnt alive. Every day brings fresh images of civilians being threatened, shelled and attacked with heavy artillery. All the signs point to an impending genocide, with a stream of hatred and invective being unleashed against this south-eastern region by Kiev and its propaganda machine. You talk about the Verkhovna Rada but it is less a parliamentary forum than a medieval scaffold on which opponents are executed.

Where are European humanism and culture now? Europe was so concerned about the rights of the Kosovar Albanians that it bombed Belgrade, yet the interests of south-eastern Ukraine, which is home to 40% of the country's population, apparently leave it indifferent. Meanwhile, Russia is doing all it can to provide humanitarian aid, has taken in large numbers of refugees and helped to de-escalate the situation to some extent. The Russian army has been accused, without any real proof, of having been involved in the Malaysia Airlines tragedy but from more detailed reports it appears that Kiev tried to cover up evidence. We believe it is important to see the investigation through to its conclusion.

You will understand now that there is a need to make a more objective assessment of the situation in Ukraine, as was done in the case of Iraq, Syria and many other countries, including Georgia where Mr Saakashvili was driven out of power by his own people. It is important to judge all crises by the same yardstick and to ask ourselves who is benefitting from these crises and why they want to drive a wedge between Russia and the European Union. In our view, the best course for Europe is to recognise regional interests. There must be no bombing. The use of military force and violence are counterproductive. The people of Russia are not in the least interested in stirring up conflict, yet that is what the transatlantic alliance and NATO would have you believe. A better approach would be to try to reach peaceful agreements. That would be a step in the right direction. The rest would follow thanks to dialogue involving all the parties concerned.

Mr Iikka KANERVA, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

It is an honour for me, as the newly elected president of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, to participate in this conference with you, my distinguished colleagues. It is also a pleasure to be back in Oslo, where the OSCE PA met a few years ago for our 19th Annual Session under the theme "Rule of Law: Combating Transnational Crime and Corruption."

The themes on the agenda of this conference include some of the biggest concerns facing our continent and the wider world. When it comes to questions of fundamental freedoms, democracy, sovereignty and security, the topics we could discuss in detail are seemingly endless, and I can think of no better place to debate them than here.

In recent years we have been reminded that there has been too much democratic backsliding on our continent and in recent months we have witnessed flagrant violations of sovereignty and growing threats to security even right here in Europe.

Just last week, I was in Moscow for a series of high-level meetings. In my discussions with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Federation Council Chairperson Valentina Matvienko, State Duma Chairperson Sergey Naryshkin and Chair of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs Aleksei Pushkov, I emphasized the need for the Russian Federation to take responsibility for its impact on the situation in Ukraine.

In all of my meetings, I underscored that Russia's stated commitment to diplomacy and peace in Ukraine requires a full accounting of its impact on the crisis as well as constructive action on the ground. We hope that the Parliamentary Assembly Liaison Group we are working to build will help complement the other OSCE and international initiatives aimed at de-escalation.

The Liaison Group, an initiative first proposed by Chairperson Naryshkin, is an endeavour to promote dialogue and de-escalation of the conflict.

For any dialogue that we build to have value, however, Russia must respect its neighbour's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as it has committed to do as an OSCE founding member and signatory of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. These commitments have been commonly agreed to by all OSCE participating States. And therefore, impunity cannot be tolerated. The violations undermine the basis of trust that should be the guiding force of international relations in the 21st century.

In democracies, there is an open discussion of the relation between guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms and security. In the name of national security and particularly in the context of the fight against terrorism, there is a constant temptation to trade away a few constitutional rights for the promise of safety and security, or even to breach another nation's sovereignty in the never-ending hunt for those who would do us harm.

But in an increasingly complex world in which friendships are sometimes strained and alliances occasionally shifting, the one thing that must remain constant is our steadfast commitment to democracy – both as a political system guaranteeing fundamental rights by the Constitution, and as a form of society based on public debate, participation and trust.

Over the years, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have forged a strong collaborative relationship, and we must continue working together to ensure democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in all our countries. Our Assemblies are indispensable in this regard, providing the democratic foundations not just for our respective institutions but for the region at large.

The Chair

Thank you and I look forward to good co-operation.

Mr Oleksandr TURCHYNOV, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine

Europe has already lived through two world wars, the longest armed conflicts in the history of the world, which brought death and suffering to millions. The experience of those two wars teaches us that there would be no winners in a third world war, which would spell the end of humankind. The same experience also teaches us, however, that unprecedented tragedies involving multiple ethnic groups and countries are the direct result of policies that seek to appease the aggressor and bow to pressure. Mindful of these terrible lessons, the international community has worked hard over the past seventy years to create a system of checks and balances. To my great regret, however, the spectre of another war now hangs over our common European home.

Part of my country's sovereign territory, Crimea, has been treacherously occupied by Russia, an occupation that was followed by the annexation of this Ukrainian peninsula. In this autonomous

republic of Ukraine, Russia has seized all the military posts, public institutions, privately-owned and corporate assets, and the monetary system is now based on the Russian currency. Local people are being forced to change their nationality and educational institutions to adopt Russian curricula. In eastern Ukraine, our Russian neighbour has launched a widespread campaign of terror and violence against the Ukrainian population; terrorists are killing, torturing and abducting people, including journalists and international observers. The civilian population is being terrorised and used as a human shield. A huge influx of state-of-the-art military hardware, weaponry and men is crossing the Russian border, while Ukrainian military positions and Ukrainian villages are being destroyed by artillery and rocket fire from Russia. At the end of August, Russian armed forces staged an out-and-out invasion, with convoys of heavy weapons and parachute units. The situation has been exacerbated by an unprecedented build-up of Russian troops on our eastern and southern borders, which could potentially lead to full-scale war.

Every day in Ukraine, communities are thrown into turmoil, hundreds of Ukrainians are killed and thousands left homeless. For these people, the future looks bleak. Moscow, meanwhile, continues to claim that Russia is not involved in these events which it itself has triggered in Ukraine. Does this inhumane and cynical policy not remind you of events in the run-up to the two world wars?

There is a Russian proverb that says: "one is not a thief, unless caught stealing." Well, they have been caught red-handed more than once, more than twice in fact. The evidence is undeniable: Russian weapons and soldiers, inflows of money and arms from Russia, Ukrainian children abducted and forcibly taken across the border into Russia. And yet Russia continues to proclaim its innocence, insisting it is Ukraine or the United States or the European Union or the entire western world which is to blame. Anyone but Russia!

There is absolutely nothing to be gained from producing more evidence. The fact is that no amount of proof will change anything because the world already knows who is behind the bloodshed in Ukraine. Russia has created a new area of instability and armed conflict in Europe, and is continuing to act in the same vein, seeking to undermine still further the foundations of Ukrainian statehood, and to exacerbate the instability in Europe. The Ukrainian people and their leaders are determined to defend their independence and territorial integrity, to try to avoid military and civilian losses, and to protect and rebuild the national economy. This is the philosophy at the heart of the peace plan and Ukrainian leaders' stated commitment to stop the carnage and launch a negotiation process.

The first agreements reached in Minsk dealt mainly with humanitarian and military issues and allowed an immediate ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners and injured persons, as well as helping to reduce the threat to civilians and pave the way for the reconstruction of urban infrastructure. Unfortunately, this fragile peace in eastern Ukraine is now under threat from the deliberate and systematic provocations being staged by Russian mercenaries and separatists, who continue to conduct operations against Ukrainian military units.

The aim of these provocations is clear: namely, to prevent a political solution to the crisis from being reached. Russia is pressing ahead with its war against Ukraine, a war that is turning the east and south into a black hole, with the prospect of further armed conflict to come.

We are grateful to the international community for its support, for strongly condemning Russian military aggression and for the sanctions it has imposed. We urge it, however, to take further effective measures to halt the aggression from Russia, which is cynically flouting the fundamental principles and norms of international law.

I wish to point out that the current situation does not just affect Ukraine but represents a threat to the whole of Europe and indeed the world. It has the potential to bring down the entire system of international relations and international law, and to undermine its fundamental principles. It is a crisis that affects the international community as a whole, so we must pull together to force the Kremlin to stop supplying weapons and financing mercenaries, and to withdraw Russian commandoes from Ukraine. This is the only way of restoring peace and stability in Europe and beyond.

For Ukraine, there can be no alternative to European integration. This month, at the same time as the European Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada ratified the agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. We sincerely thank all the countries and parliaments that supported us by ratifying this agreement. The Ukrainian government and its people are doing everything in their power to overcome all the challenges and to get the country back on the path to democratic development. We urge our

international partners to help us, as we move towards a united Europe, to introduce all the democratic changes and reforms needed and to provide us with all the necessary assistance, including technical and military, in our efforts to combat aggression. Together we can overcome this crisis.

Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL, President of the Senate, Netherlands

In "Leviathan", Thomas Hobbes wrote "that the state of men without civil society is nothing else but a mere war of all against all". According to Hobbes, the natural state of men, before we entered into society, was mere war. A social contract between the individual and the state, with which people give up some of their liberties in order to enjoy peace, was necessary. This legitimises the state as the sovereign power.

When we look at Europe today we see large problems lurking on most of our borders. Currently, we do not seem to face a great war in the sense of all states against all states. Warfare is increasingly being waged between non-state actors, both within states and across borders. In some regions, these wars can be characterised as "war of all against all". The consequences, which we already perceive today, are the fragmentation and undermining of the state. Civil society and other state structures are being destroyed.

In this sense, I wish to underline the importance – in the member states of the Council of Europe – of the linkage between us parliamentarians and our citizens. As parliamentarians we represent the people in our countries. The people have entrusted us with the task of guaranteeing social order, peace and stability. By representing and respecting all the people and giving all the people a voice that is heard, both the majority and minorities, we fulfil one of the most essential roles of the state: preventing war and conflict, preventing a "war of all against all".

Mr Juan José LUCAS GIMENEZ, Vice-President of the Senate, Spain

We have known for years about the need to build co-operation between European countries and to improve their security. Today's globalised world demands it. A country cannot survive globally without the co-operation of the other players. At issue here, therefore, are two traditional concepts: democracy and sovereignty. Democracy requires that Parliament have an active role in the deployment of military forces abroad and in framing and overseeing national defence and security policy. In a democracy, the process of decision-making may vary from country to country: some countries take a very narrow view and insist that parliament's consent be obtained in every instance while others take a broader view. This has ramifications for the concept of sovereignty.

As regards countries' capacity to take independent decisions on matters of security and defence, clearly, a greater degree of co-operation in Europe is going to limit that capacity. To date, the most that has been achieved in this area has been the creation of integrated logistics and joint troop deployments. The EU's growing responsibilities in relation to security within its zone of influence, along with the cuts in national defence budgets, mean that pan-European and transatlantic co-operation is becoming ever more vital, however.

The traditional notion of sovereignty needs updating and countries must find solutions to global and regional problems through ever closer co-operation. To this end, we need more robust structures for parliamentary democracy both in terms of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO and the European Union's foreign and security policy. Spain is actively involved in both of these structures with parliamentary delegations of deputies and senators who closely follow all these policies over the course of a parliamentary term and report back to the executive. These structures are particularly important as the Western European Union no longer exists and, as this conference has shown, there are additional benefits to be gained from co-operation between the European Parliament and national parliaments.

As well as these permanent structures, some parliaments have governmental platforms for co-operation and have developed co-operation between foreign affairs and defence committees, with regular meetings being held in an effort to find common solutions. In my view, this is an excellent initiative which the Spanish government should encourage.

I would like to make a few suggestions in the form of recommendations: greater transparency, wider intelligence sharing, joint institutions between parliaments and executives, reinforcement of the

Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and more exchanges, study missions and meetings of the kind that we are holding today.

Mr Francesco AMORUSO, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

As some of you know because you are members, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is a forum for discussion and dialogue between parliamentarians from states in the Mediterranean region. At a time when some states are going through a period of tragic instability, our assembly finds faced with the challenging task of seeking negotiated solutions in order to prevent violence, in particular against civilian populations. Humanitarian protection and aid for the worst-affected populations are central to what we do.

Over the past two years, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, in co-operation with the United Nations, has done a considerable amount of work in Syria. And now we wish to make a contribution to dialogue and support for communities caught up in the crisis between Israel and Palestine, which will be the focus of an international symposium.

There are numerous flashpoints in the Mediterranean region. Also, the principles that we are discussing today are extremely important. In the Helsinki Final Act, it was very clearly established that there can be no security in Europe without peace in the Mediterranean. The Middle East has long been the scene of conflicts other than just the one between Israel and the Palestinians. Syria, Iraq, Islamic State... the dangers are manifold. They are utterly to be condemned and represent a clear threat to security in Europe.

Equally troubling is the proliferation of new extremist movements in North Africa and the Middle East where thousands of European nationals have joined the terrorists, with all the consequences that that entails, especially if they decide to return to Europe.

We have been following with interest the UN Security Council debates on the proposals put forward by the United States. We are a regional organisation, but when we look at what is happening in Eastern Europe, we cannot help but be deeply concerned about the conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation because it involves Europe, the United States and NATO. I would therefore like to call for an end to extremism and to urge a common sense approach, with all the parties concerned returning to the negotiating table. We are an instrument for parliamentary democracy and we hope to be able to play a part in restoring stability in Europe in the light of everything I have just said.

We find ourselves in a situation where new developments are occurring all the time. As representatives of our countries, we parliamentarians have a responsibility to contribute to any action that might lead to more peace and stability for our peoples and the regions we live in. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is not content to rest on its laurels. It has made considerable efforts to support the international initiatives within the UN, especially where protecting civilians is concerned, and also to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid in Syria and, recently, in Gaza.

Something else that is troubling Europe, north and south alike, is the influx of migrants exploited by organised crime, migrants who set out on dangerous journeys across to sea to Europe. Co-operation needs to be stepped up in order to deal more effectively with this pressing issue, as the delicate matter of policing Europe's maritime borders shows. As an Italian, I am thinking of the tremendous efforts made by own country, which has saved the lives of, and provided a home for, numerous immigrants.

The activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean are the result of ongoing commitment to parliamentary diplomacy. In the current international environment, they provide a valuable addition to the traditional diplomatic channels.

To conclude, on behalf of our assembly's executive, I wish you courage in your efforts to combat, through dialogue and democracy, all those who seek to destroy our civilisation. A civilisation that we must defend with all our might so that future generations can enjoy a safer Europe and a safer Mediterranean.

Mr Yiannakis L. OMIROU, President of the House of Representatives, Cyprus

Mr. President, Honourable Colleagues,

First of all I would like to express my joy for being here in Oslo today, at this important biannual Conference, and also to congratulate President Olemic Thommessen, for a very well-organized Conference, hosted by one of the founding member states of the Council of Europe.

The theme under discussion entails some of the core values which the Council of Europe, as a Pan-European Organization, has set to safeguard and promote for the benefit of the entire continent and its peoples and even beyond. A concept which as my Danish Colleague, Mr. Lykketoft, rightly pointed out will also in future remain crucial to a stable and secure Europe and which is very much, aligned, among other, with the respect and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as with strict adherence to the rule of law, which should govern every democratic European society, indeed every society in the world.

Esteemed Colleagues,

The issue of Democracy, Sovereignty and Security in today's Europe has been and should always be among our top priorities. Because these most important ingredients of our political system usually reflect peace, stability, safety and prosperity, which all countries and peoples should enjoy. Every country deserves respect in its internationally recognized borders. It also deserves to be able to freely decide for its own destiny and the future of its people. That is what sovereignty stands for. Interlinked is the issue of democracy, which has a twofold importance, as true democracy entails the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the path to stability and prosperity, in full adherence to the rule of law. In this context, security is a sine qua non and is the only way in turn for people to enjoy peace and stability, thus leading to wise decision – making that can in turn enhance and promote political, economic and social development.

In this respect, I cannot but wonder: What would be the essence of Europe, if these ingredients were undermined or even totally absent? What would be the meaning of European values and principles, if we cannot safeguard and firmly promote these vital elements, which are, or at least should be, the only way that we, as well as generations to come, enjoy a better world? A world that is not governed by injustice, bloodshed or the fear of what tomorrow may bring. A world that, fortunately has come a long way in this course, but unfortunately also has a long way to go to reach the point of full respect and adherence to all these values and principles, without limitations and preconditions.

In effectively addressing the theme under discussion, we should focus and proceed to take the necessary decisions in order to reinstate trust in our democratic institutions, in our common European values and principles and, above all, in our peoples' hearts and minds.

Coming from Cyprus, a divided European country, which has been suffering for 40 years now the most flagrant violations of its sovereignty, its security and its people's human rights and fundamental freedoms, due to the 1974 Turkish invasion and the continuing occupation of a large part of its territory, one of the most fervent problems we are facing, apart from trying to defend our citizens' inalienable rights and our country's very existence, is to reinstate our citizens' trust in European principles, values and ideals. Because, how can we explain, to a Cypriot refugee, to missing persons' relatives, or to an enclaved child or grandmother that such harsh and prolonged injustices can be taking place on European soil and that, worst of all, there is no beam of hope at the end of the tunnel, to reverse this unacceptable situation?

We, of course, will never spare any effort to re-unite our country and our people and to end the Turkish military occupation of part of Cyprus for the benefit of all Cypriots. But the key to the solution of the Cyprus problem is, on all accounts, as we know, in the hands of Turkey. It lies idle in Ankara, which, for four decades now, refuses to use it constructively.

I leave you with a reminder of last month's 65th Anniversary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In a letter sent to us in this respect, PACE President Anne Brasseur stated, and I quote: "the founding Fathers of our Assembly, against all odds and stereotypes committed themselves to the construction out of the ashes of hatred, a new Europe. A Europe based on common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A Europe without dividing lines. A Europe

where mutually respectful inter-parliamentary dialogue, and not constant defiance, would become a key to the sound international order”.

Thank you for your attention!

The Chair

Thank you very much – and thank you for quoting me!

Ms Maja GOJKOVIC, Speaker of the National Assembly, Serbia

It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to be here to debate democracy, sovereignty and security in Europe.

Throughout history, the building of democratic institutions in Europe took place in parallel with the process of defining sovereignty of nations and states and the preservation of their security. Democracy, sovereignty and security are deeply interlinked. This modern era of globalisation and the mutual interdependence and complexity of economic and political relations requires dialogue and co-operation in resolving open issues. Integration processes on our continent have changed the way we see sovereignty and security. These are not issues of one individual country but a common value that is bringing us together. In this way, we strengthen our democratic institutions and practice.

Contemporary Europe faces problems such as the financial crisis, decline in support for the European project and a rise in nationalism. Our experience in Serbia teaches us that the best way of facing these challenges is a strengthening of international co-operation and the integration process.

The best way of protecting people and their rights and of protecting cultural heritage and true values of democracy and freedom is strengthening the rule of law as well as political, economic and cultural co-operation, dedication to dialogue and compromise. This is the best possible tool for achieving a long-term sustainable solution for all outstanding issues in today's Europe.

Serbia is dedicated to the preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, in compliance with international law. We are ready to put the good international relations we are carefully nurturing into all outstanding issues.

Internally, Serbia regards reform made within the process of European integration not only as an instrument but as a value in itself. Although consensus is rare in parliamentary practice, the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has achieved political consensus on the priority of European integration.

The role of the parliament is very important. Proper functioning of the parliament entails the adoption of good-quality laws and careful oversight of the government, as well as transparency, when presenting citizens with the goals of political reforms and the significance of international relations.

The parliament contributes to building confidence and solidarity within the entire international community. In my capacity as Speaker of the Parliament of Serbia I wish to extend assurances of our commitment to these goals, which are a great responsibility of our mandate. Therefore, they require us to devote all our knowledge and energy to them.

The Chair

It is now 6.45 pm so we must interrupt the debate and we will resume our work tomorrow at 9 am.
(*The sitting rose at 6.45 pm*)

Friday 12 September 2014 – 9.00 am

Mr Olemic Thommessen, Speaker of the Storting, in the Chair

We will now continue the debate on theme 2.

Mr Eiki NESTOR, President of the Parliament, Estonia

As we all know, the military activity in eastern Ukraine appears to be the greatest concern and danger in Europe today. Although the recently concluded ceasefire is more or less in force, tension in the region shows no signs of abating. The aggression continues. Units of Russia's regular armed forces participate in military operations, and additional military units are sent across the border from Russia to Ukraine. As long as Russia does not stop the lies and falsehoods and denies that its armed forces are directly engaged in military activities, Moscow's calls to find a political solution cannot be taken seriously.

The efforts of third countries and various organisations and peace mediators to find a solution cannot be successful, either. Russia is a party to a military conflict that has violated the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Russia's activities created the possibility to shoot down the passenger plane. Pressure on Russia should be persistent and the sanctions have to be continued.

The explanation Russia has forwarded publicly for the participation of its armed forces in military activities in Ukraine is that they are volunteers at the expense of their vacations. Elite forces equipped with heavy weapons going to the neighboring country's territory for months to wage war does not seem less frightening than the reality. It would mean that Russia has no control over its military forces and weapons, but that is far from the truth. Russian society simply does not have any democratic control over the leadership of the state.

The President of Russia and his closest supporters have destroyed democratic institutions and civil society in the past 14 years. We have been able to observe how it has been gradually suppressed. Speeches to the Russian Government about European values – democracy, human rights, personal liberties, freedom of the press – have fallen on deaf ears. Have not we in the Council of Europe shown too much patience in tolerating that?

Ukraine is a European country, a member state of the Council of Europe. The events in Ukraine are the most serious security crisis in Europe for the past 70 years. The aggressor is a nuclear state. The military occupation of a neighboring country to increase one's territory is unprecedented and unacceptable in Europe after the Second World War.

Russia's occupation of Crimea and its military activities in eastern Ukraine are a serious challenge to all democratic associations in Europe, including the Council of Europe. It is a litmus test of European democracy. Democracy is not just a skill with words, but first of all activity. The proclaimed ceasefire in Ukraine must be followed by real negotiations starting with the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The emergence of a new frozen conflict in Europe must not be acceptable. The Council of Europe must efficiently use its instruments to contribute to the solving of the situation. It is an issue relating to the principles and dignity of the Organisation. I wish all success in seizing the opportunity to take fundamental action.

Mr Ogtay ASADOV, Speaker of the Milli Mejlis, Azerbaijan

The theme chosen gives us an opportunity to debate a whole range of important issues for our future. The preconditions for sustainable development can be summed up in the three inextricably linked overriding principles of democracy, sovereignty and security. The challenges which emerged in the process of democratic development in European countries in the last quarter of the 20th century were primarily linked to internal factors, in particular changes in social structures and the renewal of the standards concerning the political, social and economic behaviour of different groups. The problems facing democracy today are mainly determined by the growing influence of outside factors such as terrorism and cross-border crime, which have an impact on countries' internal development. In some countries, these problems are further compounded by the existence of ethnic separatism, aggressive nationalism, foreign occupation and violations of national sovereignty.

The challenges of the modern era are bound to cause doubts about the possibilities for solving the problems of democratic governance using the models from the past. The question is as follows: either we must stick to our position as observers and just watch the build-up and increasing number of challenges on the road to democratic development or we must deploy all our efforts to develop an integrated approach to the security problems threatening the system of democratic values, in particular the attempts to encroach on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, as well as the growth of ethnic separatism and aggressive nationalism. On several occasions in various forums, the representatives of Azerbaijan have proposed looking at the issue from this angle. There is an obvious reason for us, as for 20 years, 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, in other words, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven bordering areas, has been occupied by Armenian armed forces. Ethnic cleansing, combined with acts of cruel genocide, has been carried out in the occupied regions and 1 million Azerbaijanis have been forced to leave their homes.

Encroaching on the sovereignty and security of a country has the effect of undermining democracy and the rule of law. We have always sought to draw our European colleagues' attention to the fact that if attempts are made to interfere with the sovereignty, territorial integrity or security of one of the Council of Europe's member states, they should be seen as attempts to call into question our union and coexistence. I would quote an oriental proverb here: when it rains, the rain does not just fall on only one person. Unfortunately, in recent years, some issues have been regarded as being more important on the European agenda. Our country has nevertheless been the victim of military aggression committed by another Council of Europe member state. That ought to have been considered with all the attention necessary with regard to the security of Azerbaijan as a fully-fledged member of the Council of Europe. If we had said that that undermined Europe's security, if we had not applied double standards and if we had called a spade a spade, in other words, if we had not called separatism self-determination and if terrorism had not been elevated to a national liberation movement, we might not perhaps be facing threats of this kind.

We really do have to acknowledge that Europe is confronted with huge challenges. It is not just a matter of the freedom and security of individuals, whether with regard to food, information or energy, but also of issues relating to shared security and threats to the sovereignty and integrity of states. These challenges can only be tackled properly if we harness everybody's efforts. Never before in history has there been such a need for co-operation between states. We have to understand, without any ambiguity, that we have collective responsibility for protecting common values.

It is dangerous to turn a blind eye to ethnic separatism, aggressive nationalism and the occupation of other people's territory. That undermines sovereignty, democracy and Europe as a whole. European countries must once again unambiguously declare that the self-determination of nations can only be exercised in the context of the territorial integrity of states. I think you will all agree that any arbitrary and illegal attempts to violate duly recognised territories and borders must be warded off immediately through the joint efforts of countries so as to avoid creating negative precedents in this way.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, I should like to express our desire to harness all our efforts and act jointly with the parliaments of other European countries so as to find solutions to the very complex problems facing our continent today and protect democracy, security and sovereignty on a lasting basis.

Ms Hermine NAGHDALYAN, Vice-President of the National Assembly, Armenia

Dear Mr. Tommessen,
Dear Madam Brasseur,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me welcome Presidents of the Parliaments of the Council of Europe Members States, participants of the conference, and representatives of international organizations and extend words of thanks to the Parliament of Norway for excellent organization of the event.

Dear Mr. Tommessen, I would also like congratulate you and all Norwegian colleagues on the occasion of two hundred year anniversary of the Constitution. This historical document can be truly considered as one of the basic documents in the field of the human rights protection and tolerance in Europe.

Dear Colleagues,

In coming days Armenia will celebrate 23rd anniversary of its independence. After restoring its independence, building of the statehood on the basis of the European values of democratic society, market economy, democratic institutions, rule of law, human rights protection became priority for our statehood.

During recent years wide scale institutional reforms directed at the fighting against corruption, safeguarding of free economy and transparency of Government's activities, independence of justice, freedom of speech, development of civil society, democratic control over armed forces. Implementation of deep political and economic reforms became possible thanks to the cooperation with the European community, Council of Europe particularly.

Being open for wide cooperation on international arena and supportive to the integration processes, Armenia has to take into consideration its strategic interests first, especially under closed borders and conflicts on the doorstep.

Transport and energy blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan for more than 20 years disturbs the development of Armenian economy. The Armenian-Turkish closed border is the last remained in modern Europe. We are confident that this illegal blockade must be condemned by international community.

The initiative of Armenia to normalize its relations with Turkey without preconditions has been applauded by international community. But Turkey didn't respect its commitments, and returned the language of preconditions. We are ready to continue this path once Turkey is ready to refrain from creating artificial obstacles.

Unfortunately today the regional economic projects have tendency to include some countries at the expense of excluding the others, thus worsening the situation with the dividing lines existing in our region. In this active period of globalization in different parts of the world integration processes are considered as a mainstream of economic development and an important element of security.

It is worth to mention that Armenia is in a permanent danger of war from Azerbaijan. The president of this country in his public statements threatens with war, considering Armenians as enemies. This is the vivid example of hate speech the danger of which was stressed yesterday by Mr. Tommessen and the President Brasseur. More than that, this hate speech tolerated by the international community had its practical implementation when Azerbaijan seriously violated the ceasefire regime this summer resulting in dozens of victims from both sides.

Instead of preparing its people for peaceful solution, Azerbaijan has increased its military budget for more than 20 times.

Armenophobia became state ideology. Ethnic Armenians are prohibited to visit Azerbaijan, irrespective of their citizenship. It is the real xenophobia, dear Colleagues. Notorious black list of foreigners who are banned to enter Azerbaijan because they have ever visited Nagorno Karabakh is growing. This list includes not only politicians, but also journalists, artists and sportsmen. We have recently witnessed the situation when the Head of the French Delegation to PACE, Mr. Rene Rouquet, was banned to participate at the Bureau meeting in Baku.

Any attempt within the Azerbaijani society to establish contacts, to create confidence between the societies of two countries faces strong resistance of Azerbaijani leadership and are brutally suppressed. In this context I do believe, that No Hate Parliamentary Alliance recently initiated by PACE will be a good platform for sincere dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The voiced problems are alarming not only for the region but for the whole continent as well. There must be no room for the policy of hate and intolerance. Our sequential actions must be aimed at having Europe without dividing lines.

Dear colleagues,

Irrespective the existing problems and challenges in the region the choice of Armenia is democracy and tolerance as a guarantee of welfare and peaceful coexistence.

Mr Sean BARRETT, President of the Houses of the Oireachtas, Ireland

I very much welcome the opportunity to address the conference today and the theme of this debate. I do so against the worrying backdrop of international crisis in Israel and Gaza and in Iraq and Syria. In the time available to me my focus will be the crisis that is nearer to all of us: the crisis in Ukraine.

We gather here in Oslo in the year when Norway celebrates the bicentenary of its constitution, the second oldest constitution in the world. With that in mind I cannot but reflect on the fact that we are fortunate to live in a part of the world with written constitutions and democratic governance, where we can elect and change governments through the exercise of the will of the people. We live in societies with fundamental democratic and civil rights. Human rights are protected by law and the rule of law prevails.

What we have witnessed in Ukraine over the past months, especially in the most recent offensive, represents the most serious crisis in Europe over recent years. I deplore the violence and loss of life and the suffering that has been inflicted on our fellow Europeans.

The dire situation in the region resonates with me in particular as I paid an official visit to Ukraine in October 2013. During my visit the main focus was on the forthcoming Vilnius Summit and the signing of the European partnership agreement, which of course did not happen.

One of my abiding memories is the meeting I had with university students, who did not express themselves pro the European Union or against the Russia they had known all their lives. They simply wanted a chance to be part of a modern Europe, in which they could travel and enjoy the freedoms that we in western Europe take for granted.

My second observation is that some people who held high positions in parliament and government were not honest in the views they were expressing to those they represented. I personally met some of these people, including ex-President Yanukovich. It was clear that they were expressing views in contradiction to the actions that they finally undertook.

As I reflect on this crisis we can all see how things have changed terribly in the space of 12 months. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report at the end of July that at the time estimated that more than 1,100 people had been killed and more than 3,400 seriously injured. That was back in July. More recent reports put the death toll much higher at about 3,000. The UNHCR also states that 110,000 internally displaced persons have been forced to flee the violence in the area. This is a totally unacceptable scenario to contemplate in the 21st century.

It is essential that there is a full, internationally recognised investigation into the downing of flight MH17 to ensure that those responsible for this tragic and potentially criminal incident are brought to justice. It is imperative that all sides involved in the conflict in Ukraine work together to ensure that the bereaved families get the answers they need and deserve.

The crisis in Ukraine needs to be resolved, and the resolution found must be based on a peaceful and inclusive negotiated settlement. This is an urgent priority of the entire international community. It is my view that only through the democratic process, expressed through the will of all the people, will Ukraine develop as a democratic and stable society to the betterment of all its peoples.

Throughout every phase of this crisis Ireland has worked closely with our EU partners and internationally through the United Nations and the OSCE to address these issues as effectively as possible. All EU member states are united in the view that what has happened in Ukraine is completely unacceptable and will have serious consequences for our relations with Russia. The EU has resolved to do all it can to facilitate an inclusive and negotiated settlement and has been actively involved in efforts to promote dialogue and peace in Ukraine since the outset of the crisis.

The targeted and phased measures against Russia agreed by the European Council reflect the fact that no peaceful resolution has yet been found. One of the key initiatives within the European neighborhood policy has been the Eastern Partnership – a major priority for the EU since its launch in 2009. The purpose of the Eastern Partnership is to create a zone of prosperity and stability to the east

of the EU committed to the democratic values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is fundamentally in the EU's security interests that the Eastern Partnership succeeds in these objectives.

The crisis in Ukraine and its impact on relations between the EU and Russia has raised serious questions on the EU's policy towards its eastern neighborhood. Prior to the next Eastern Partnership summit in Riga in May 2015 the EU needs to reflect on the lessons it can draw from events of the past few months so that we can build a strong, sustainable Eastern Partnership that will enhance security, stability and prosperity.

Here in Europe we have begun a series of commemorations of significant events that took place 100 years ago. It is not scaremongering to say that perhaps this time 100 years ago before the First World War started the world was more at peace than it is today. We have lived through a period of relative peace – certainly in this part of the world – in recent decades, but that is now at risk. We must ensure that Europe remains a continent where democracy is paramount, where the sovereignty of all countries is respected and where all citizens can live in the knowledge that their security is inviolable.

Mr Claude HÉCHE, Deputy Speaker of the Council of States, Switzerland

Our institutions cannot just stand idly by while some parts of the world are experiencing excesses of violence. As democratic parliaments, we have a duty to become involved as closely as possible in resolving the security problems in our continent, while also preventing conflicts. We are forums for discussions and for exchanging ideas – forums which must all foster dialogue. In the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, however, dialogue is still lacking and that is worrying. This lack of communication and failure to listen to the other side, unfortunately, mean there is no real debate, which could have serious consequences. Yet it is our duty to do everything in our power to restore calm on Europe's eastern borders. There is still time before the situation deteriorates.

Of course, we do not live in an ideal world in which dialogue would resolve all problems. That would be a bit too easy. But communicating, exchanging views and talking can defuse crises. When communication has broken down, there is not much hope of going back. We must preserve this fine thread of dialogue in the hope that it becomes stronger and the diplomats can get down to work again.

In the current situation in Europe, as Mr Didier Burkhalter, the President of the Swiss Confederation and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, has rightly said, it is not enough just to talk about the Russian President, Mr Vladimir Putin, we also have to talk with him. We must address the differences in approaches to security which have divided Europe and Russia for several years and we must have the courage to discuss the issues that divide us frankly. Parliamentarians can express views more freely, while not forgetting to take an approach that transcends sometimes narrow national interests. Establishing ties, getting to know one another and learning to understand how the other side works can defuse the most difficult situations and lay the foundations for long-term diplomacy. Dialogue about the fundamental issue of security really must be stepped up. As parliaments, we have a fundamental part to play in this tricky exercise. While governments are, of course, in charge, our task goes beyond observing developments and passing legislation, both as regards diplomacy and as regards security. In this context, our parliamentary assemblies at the Council of Europe and the OSCE have a role as intermediaries. I note, in particular, that the Presidential Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recently met the Speaker of the Russian Duma in Paris. In the context of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, an inter-parliamentary dialogue between Russia and Ukraine is due to be held in Geneva at the beginning of October, in co-operation with several national delegations, including the Swiss representatives.

I also see particular significance and a sign of peace in the fact that we have been meeting since yesterday here in Oslo, a city where a peace initiative for the Middle East was launched in 1993. Even though in that conflict, too, we are still far from the final goal, there can be no respite until the objective is achieved. We must constantly work on the issue without losing hope.

In this globalised world, our security does not begin at Europe's borders, it also depends on that of our neighbours. The arrival in Italy and Greece and other southern countries of refugees fleeing crises and violence and the ongoing Syrian conflict both remind us how vulnerable our continent is. We are in an interdependent world, even though some of my compatriots sometimes forget it, which I

personally regret. Things also therefore need to be cleared up in our own regions. We have a duty to create a new climate, reduce tensions and agree a common vision for European security.

We must learn from our history and keep on talking, as well as listening. That way we will be stronger and live in peace.

Mr János LATORCAI, Deputy Speaker of the Országgyűlés, Hungary

We all know the lessons which should be drawn from history, as did the Council of Europe's founding fathers, who drew inspiration from Greek philosophers and Roman law, Judaeo-Christian values and the concept of a life based on western ideals and the desire to achieve lasting peace. However, over the decades, since the founding of the Council of Europe, the world has changed radically. The Iron Curtain was torn down, the Cold War ended and Europe experienced a great wave of democratisation. Other developments have also taken place, in particular the most regrettable crisis in Ukraine, while terrorism has emerged in several western countries. These are all factors which frustrate our efforts to ensure security. We must therefore redefine the concepts of sovereignty and democracy and give them new meaning, while recognising that the two concepts are closely linked. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, several European philosophers, including Jean Bodin, John Locke and Rousseau, analysed the concept of popular sovereignty and the question of the representation of the people. They all reached the conclusion that it was necessary to hold general elections, and allow governments to lay down the rules for co-operation within society, and that these elections were a manifestation of the principle of popular sovereignty.

There can be no doubt that these processes do operate in the member states, in spite of the fact that the will of the people is expressed through different electoral systems. That is why I believe that rather than criticising the electoral systems which prevail in our different member states, it is much more important to draw conclusions from the European Parliament elections held this year. We can also attempt to identify the reasons for public indifference, a trend which we saw several times during those elections. Can this indifference be put down to a democratic deficit in the functions and institutions of the EU or does it stem from the lack of a European people as such, or should it be seen as a criticism of the future which is being planned for Europe? Answering this question is vital because, ever since the Council of Europe was founded, our co-operation has been based on the sovereignty of the member states and their implementation of the Council of Europe's resolutions.

This co-operation based on sovereignty and voluntary participation must be accepted by all members regardless of their political beliefs. What can guide us in our efforts to answer this question of such great importance are the decisions taken by Europe following the crisis in Ukraine. They seek to lessen the economic impact of Russia's reactions to European sanctions.

Another important aspect is the potential solidarity of European citizens with farmers who are facing difficulties because of the contraction of their market in the East. If we are unable to unite and co-ordinate our efforts effectively in these circumstances, that will prove that the European demos which federalists dreamt about does not exist. It will also prove that we are unable to come up to the challenges facing us, which is bound to have an impact on Europe's present and future.

It is obvious that Europe is experiencing an identity crisis. It is obvious that Europe is unable to take a firm stance against the increasing persecution of Christianity in the eastern parts of the world. Unless we return to our Christian roots, strengthen our Christian identity, take effective measures to protect it and unless we review our immigration and integration policies, we will be paving the way for extremists and the enemies of democracy and our European values. I would therefore ask you to think about all that before preparing the strategic decisions to be taken in the future, as Europe has a duty to preserve its own identity and even to strengthen it.

Ms Inese LĪBIŅA-EGNERE, Vice-President of the Saeima, Latvia

It is a genuine pleasure and honour to be here among you here today – today's topic is relevant to all of us. In my address I should like to focus on the situation in Ukraine, including the factor of Russia.

In the past couple of months Russia has tested the limits of our patience by crossing red lines and challenging the basis of democracy, sovereignty and security in Europe. Developments in Ukraine clearly attest to the fact that the core values of the Council of Europe can be taken for granted.

The situation in Ukraine is a great challenge for Europe and for the international community at large. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea has changed the security and trust environment in Europe. By violating its obligations and commitments under international agreements Russia has threatened the stability and peace in Europe in which my generation happily believed.

Democratic countries in Europe, including my country of Latvia, condemn the invasion of Ukrainian territory by armed forces of the Russian Federation and the annexation of Crimea. As stated by the European Council last Saturday, a mutually agreed ceasefire must be accompanied by the re-establishment of Ukrainian control over its borders, an immediate halt to the flow of arms, the withdrawal of Russian personnel from Ukraine and the urgent release of all hostages and prisoners. The agreement reached by the contact group in Minsk on 5 September should serve as a first step towards the settlement of the conflict. It is crucial that both sides implement a ceasefire. The main task remains not to allow the establishment of a frozen conflict.

So far, the EU and like-minded countries have been working hand in hand in imposing restrictive measures against Russia, thus making them more targeted and effective and having a cumulative nature. Unfortunately, the restrictive measures applied so far have not yielded any short-term results, but we hope they will work in the medium and long term.

Regrettably, Russia has not been willing to engage in meaningful dialogue and take practical steps to solve the conflict. Russia remains the root of the destabilisation and part of the problem itself. As long as it stubbornly denies its involvement in the targeted destabilisation of Ukraine it is impossible to initiate a constructive resolution of the conflict by peaceful means.

Effectiveness, which is closely linked to credibility, is crucial to all international organisations, especially those with a large membership such as the Council of Europe. In the light of this manifold crisis, the value-based mandate of the Council of Europe is more relevant than ever before. Therefore, this Organisation should seize the opportunity to increase its role as both an advocate and promoter of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – the very foundations of credibility.

Successful parliamentary elections are an important precondition of the stabilisation of Ukraine. The extraordinary parliamentary elections of 26 October should be held in compliance with international standards. The observation of the respective bodies of the Council of Europe and other international organisations will be most crucial for the elections. The EU's Eastern Partnership will also help Ukraine to recover and work on necessary reforms in different fields. The Eastern Partnership will be one of the top priorities of Latvia's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Eastern Partnership summit in Riga, scheduled for May 2015, will provide an opportunity to evaluate the progress achieved in our relations since the summit in Vilnius and will define new strategic guidelines for the future. We should consider the best way of joining our efforts with those of countries that also believe that the region should be based on democratic government, the rule of law, human rights and principles of good governance.

Let us hope for enduring democracy, sovereignty and security in Europe.

Mr Einar K. GUDFINNSSON, President of the Althingi, Iceland

I thank Mogens Lykketoft, Speaker of the Danish Parliament, for his intriguing presentation yesterday. This year marks the 200-year celebration of the Norwegian constitution and of the Storting. Another milestone is of the greatest importance and it has special relevance to today's topic. Two hundred years have passed since the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Kiel, the foundation for the longest period of peace between Nordic neighbours and for a relatively long period of peace in Europe. Unfortunately, peace was broken and our continent saw in the past century bloodshed on a greater scale than ever before in its otherwise bloody history. I refer to World War One and World War Two.

The new world order established after World War Two soon transformed the balance of power between the Communist states led by the Soviet Union and the free democracies of the west led by the United States of America. This balance was disrupted after the fall of the Soviet Union and our continent was united under the banner of democracy, the fundamental basis for economic growth and the best remedy to prevent conflict.

NATO played an important role in preserving peace in our times in Europe, but dark skies are gathering to the east and once again we are witnessing bloodshed and armed conflict, this time in Ukraine. It is absolutely clear, and we can all agree, that territorial integrity must in all circumstances be respected, and that that is of the greatest importance. Disputes between member countries should be solved according to international law and agreements. Any breach of such principles will have severe consequences, as has been the case with trade sanctions and blacklisting of key people in politics and business. The strengthening of sanctions against Russia, taking place under the initiative of the EU and the US, demonstrates how seriously those parties perceive the situation in Ukraine and the direct or indirect involvement of Russia, which is beyond dispute.

We have an obligation to solve disputes peacefully if possible and we have a political and moral obligation to assist countries in crisis and transformation. Economic assistance is urgently needed in Ukraine and its leaders have been calling for military assistance. Democratic assistance is also needed. A well-functioning democracy is a prerequisite for a sustainable economy. We can all individually or as groups of national parliaments contribute to rebuilding the stability, functioning democracy and, hopefully, economic stability of Ukraine.

At meetings with Baltic colleagues I have observed their worries, which they share with some other former Warsaw Pact members who were within the Soviet sphere of influence. We must admit that recent developments give reason to reassess security in Europe. Such assessments must include hard and soft security threats, including cyber security, energy security and others.

Security threats are evident in neighbouring regions and the participation of citizens of our member states in the atrocities of IS in Syria and Iraq can pose serious security threats upon their return to their respective home countries. Assistance in times of conflict and assistance in state-building and building democracies and democratic institutions and processes in times of peace is therefore urgently needed in the Middle East and North Africa.

The assessment of security concerns is a constant and dynamic task, and strengthening democracy is the best means of preventing conflicts and is the the basis for economic progress.

Mr Bogdan BORUSEWICZ, Speaker of the Senate, Poland

Two years ago, when we met for the previous conference, we would never have imagined how the international situation would develop. At the time, a revolution called the Arab Spring was sweeping through North Africa and we were full of hope, Europe was stable and the future seemed bright. Now the situation has changed radically and our discussions have been dominated by conflicts in two regions, firstly, in the Middle East, in Syria and Iraq, where the situation is full of threats, and, secondly, in Europe, where the conflicts involve countries which take part in the work of the Council of Europe and hence are also here at this conference. These conflicts are dangerous, they are very extreme and are not far away, quite the contrary.

The closest conflict is between two members of our organisation. It is very dangerous because the aggressor is a superpower armed with nuclear weapons. In military terms, it would outclass any other country in Europe in the event of confrontation. This conflict is also very dangerous because we do not really know what Russia's objectives are. Does it want to establish or re-establish an empire and, if so, what would the boundaries of that new empire be: those of the Soviet Union or those of the Russian Empire from the century before? We do not know; it is not clear at all. That is why the situation is so worrying.

Those are not just the fears of Ukraine, they are the fears of Europe and of all of Russia's direct neighbours. Russia is guilty of violating the principles of the United Nations Charter. Russia has flouted the principle of the inviolability of frontiers. Yet that is a principle which guarantees the stability and prosperity of all our countries.

We are talking about borders in Europe and in central and eastern Europe. And then there are the frontiers in the Balkans, which are very new, too. The principle of the inviolability of frontiers is the basis of security in Europe. We are faced with a situation where a superpower annexes part of the territory of another European country and then a referendum is held while it continues to occupy that territory! Other military interventions have followed. There can be no doubt that Russia is supporting this military aggression. In August, army units from the Russian Federation entered the territory of

Ukraine to start an intervention. This is an operation which involves great danger and very real threats.

The EU and, more broadly, all European countries are trying to respond so as to find a possible solution. They are trying to keep dialogue going. While many attempts are being made to open up dialogue, two sides are needed for it to go ahead. We cannot accept one country using its armed forces to push another country into taking a decision. We cannot accept the fait accompli resulting from military operations any more than we can accept the threat of the use of armed forces. Ukraine is a sovereign country like all the countries represented here. It is entitled to take decisions on a sovereign basis and it is entitled to follow the path chosen by its people in elections which, I hope, can really be held in October without anyone hindering them.

The Senate and the Lower House of the Polish Parliament are going to take part in the observation of these elections, which should safeguard democracy in Ukraine and consolidate its position in Europe.

Mr Pietro GRASSO, Speaker of the Senato della Repubblica, Italy

This theme is very important for our common future. Global conflicts led to the suicide of Europe. This brought about a change which was well interpreted by the Council of Europe and then the European Community and subsequently took shape in other forums. There is a supranational reality which unites us and follows on from a long phase of peace, stability and the strengthening of rights.

As has been said several times since the beginning of the conference, Europe is now facing an internal and external crisis. It is beset by nationalism, populism and feelings of distrust on the part of citizens who want jobs, growth, security and a reduction of the social divides which are widening constantly, even in the countries less hard hit by the recession. This all presents risks and threats for democracy. There is a danger of it being hollowed out from inside. We have societies which are democracies on paper but are no longer free. I have always regarded democracy as a work in progress, which is never fully defined. It is not a set of rules but an internal attitude and an institutional environment. There can be no democracy without individual and collective ethics. The most democratic of constitutions will wither away unless there is a degree of energy behind it. As parliamentarians, our duty is to strengthen the culture of transparency and accountability. We must bring our enthusiasm and values to all parties and all political movements and we must provide practical responses to the needs of all citizens in terms of employment and innovation.

Democracy and our internal stability are threatened by conflicts and unacceptable violations of the territorial integrity of countries close to our borders, as well as terrorist threats, corruption, organised crime and geopolitical divides in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. No country can go it alone in taking on these threats. The global order is very different from the one in which the nation state model emerged. Nowadays, it is important for countries to identify with a supranational legal and political community. Together, we form a big region in geographical and also in economic and political terms and an area of shared values. In pooling part of our sovereign power and deepening our co-operation, we can strengthen security, guarantee rights and freedoms and improve democracy for the benefit of everybody in Europe.

I strongly believe that we must reassert this common identity and this collective European spirit, which must be stronger than all forms of national egotism. We have shared traditions, cultures and collective memories. That is all very strong and there is real solidarity, freedom, equality and justice, which all help to prevent conflict, barbarity, persecution and totalitarianism.

The Bishop of the Favelas once said that if you had a dream and did not share it with other people, it would remain a dream. But if many people shared the same dream, something real and concrete could be made of it. I urge you to dream big and to dream together. Europe must once again be something people dream about. Politics must be at the heart of our concerns so that the dream becomes reality and gives shape to everybody's aspirations. I am convinced that there is no alternative to strengthening our union. It is an existential challenge to be taken up. We have shared roots and a shared destiny and we will not allow this to be jeopardised by destructive and revisionist ideologies.

Italy was first converted to the European ideal 60 years ago and it will continue to be active; indeed, it is currently holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union, and it will do everything to resolve conflicts by diplomatic means and dialogue. Europe cannot afford to commit suicide again. I

firmly believe that parliamentary networks are key forums for dialogue. They can also foster positive developments at intergovernmental level.

That is our moral imperative and my personal commitment.

Ms Bariza KHIARI, First Deputy Speaker of the Senate, France

By including the theme of Democracy, Sovereignty and Security in Europe on its agenda, our conference made a wise choice. It demonstrates its interest in taking up a subject which both is topical, as shown by the situation in Ukraine, and has a structural role, given the tensions that can emerge between the three terms.

Democracy has become a benchmark political system which Europe has taken forward and which it offers to the world.

At the same time, after decades of destructive conflict, Europeans have succeeded in establishing lasting peace in our continent. Some even regard peace – or at least did so until the events in Ukraine – as the normal state of relations between countries. Most Europeans and their leaders have banished the word “war” from their vocabularies and, indeed, their vision of the world. Of course, Europe has seen some violent conflicts, for instance in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, armed conflict is no longer regarded as a means of settling disputes between states.

While democracy remains the overriding political principle in Europe, our continent is plagued by doubts about the long-term sovereignty of states, and attacks are being made on its security.

Clearly, questions can be asked about the future of the European model. National sovereignty is one of the founding principles of the international legal order and is therefore a precondition both for the exercise of democratic principles within national boundaries and for the security of nations. However, this sovereignty is now being challenged in different ways, giving rise to questions and sometimes concerns about the long-term future of democracy and security.

The European construction process is based on transfers of sovereignty affected by democratic states with a view to ensuring greater effectiveness and security in dealing with the consequences of globalisation.

European integration is now being challenged in democratic elections. This was highlighted by the European Parliament elections in May. The trend means we have to look at the reasons for the link which some voters make between national sovereignty and security, believing that the need for the latter makes strengthening of the former necessary.

There is actually a curious paradox surrounding sovereignty in Europe: in the west of the continent, some people believe that it is being called into question by the European construction process; in the east, it is genuinely being undermined in a country with European aspirations.

At the same time, there are real threats to Europe’s security. On an internal level, they are reflected in an upsurge in populism and rejection of people from other communities, both of which undermine the democratic security of our societies.

On an external level, the threats are to be found on Europe’s boundaries. The situation in Libya, Syria and Iraq is particularly worrying. The military victories of the so-called Islamic State, which are being facilitated by the breakdown of the Iraqi state, affect national boundaries and sovereignty directly. The so-called Islamic State is not pursuing national objectives, but fighting as part of a faith-based pan-Islamist struggle aimed at re-establishing the historic caliphate.

Of course, it is not religion which has to be combated; Islam as a form of spirituality is not the problem. We must combat those who manipulate religion for political and social purposes – here, I am thinking, in particular, of their archaic approach to the role of women and their desire to eradicate the minorities, especially Christian groups, who make that part of the world a more diverse and hence a richer place.

The collateral damage in Europe resulting from these conflicts is real, in particular in the form of the terrorist threat. Given the increased demand for security there, Europe must come up with a model in

which the vital expression of democratic will is not reflected in inward-looking nationalism but, on the contrary, raises awareness of the need for and benefits of shared sovereignty. With its values, the Council of Europe is the ideal forum for the relevant discussions and work.

Mr Yuli-Yoel EDELSTEIN, President of the Knesset, Israel

When we see the titles of various general sessions, based on personal experience and the countries from which we come, we each have different associations and thoughts. From my first day as Speaker of the Knesset I have thought of democracy and security in slightly different terms. I preach to Knesset colleagues and visiting guests that democracy should never be taken for granted. It is so easy to find excuses to limit and narrow the democratic process. The security situation in Israel 66 years ago was terrible. We were being attacked by neighbouring countries and not recognised by anyone in the area. It would have been so easy for the founding fathers to have appealed to the nation, "Let's leave democracy for later. Let us now deal with real issues of security for our daily existence." Thank God that never happened.

I can tell you with a smile that from the very first session, when the elected constitutional assembly decided to turn itself into a sitting parliament, the Opposition fiercely attacked the decision and demanded immediate new elections because it was a constitutional assembly and not a parliament that was elected. Democratic process started from the very first session.

I listened to the speeches during yesterday's opening session. One of the speakers used a well-known phrase, which to most people here sounds like motherhood and apple pie: democracies do not start wars with each other. For us, it is different. Israel is a democracy – many of you have visited it and know it is hard to argue with that – and time and again we have been dragged into violent conflicts in our area, so for us it is not just a motherhood and apple pie phrase but a real task. How do we finally get to the point where in our area there are more countries that share the values of the democratic process and where democracies that do not fight and start wars with each other try to settle things at the negotiating table and not through violence and conflict?

You, Mr President, and Madame Brasseur yesterday mentioned another vital issue: hate speech. This is definitely important, and not just in our respective countries. It is important that we do not bring hate speech to international conferences and places where we get together to discuss issues of mutual importance. That is why you will not find any accusations – God forbid – of hatred in my remarks. You will find hope.

Despite all the difficulties in our area we have the ability to do two things that are most important. First and foremost, we isolate those who prevent progress, the terrorist organisations – Isis, Hezbollah, Hamas and unfortunately dozens of others that I cannot mention owing to the time limits. I believe in our ability still to distinguish between good and evil – still to say, "These are not and can never be part of the solution. They are part of the problem and it is our mutual task to fight them".

No less important – and here Europe can play a huge role – is the developing of co-operation between parliamentarians in our area. It is doable. We are too slow in doing it because we are very fond of political discussion. Let us try to start dealing with real issues. I believe that my colleagues in the Middle East and the whole area worry no less than we do in the Knesset about the environment, water resources, the status of women and education. Let us try to discuss these issues – them for their constituencies, me for my constituency in Israel, with the involvement of democratic parliaments, including many of those represented here. That could finally give us a chance.

As someone who knows only too well what it takes to stand against dictatorship and what price one sometimes has to pay – I refer to my days in the former Soviet Union – I do not think it would be fair or realistic to demand that my colleagues in the region immediately become heroes and turn to their constituents or governments and demand compromise and normalisation of relations with Israel. But real issues – yes; still, small voices, in the language of the prophets. We will be able to find these small voices and turn them into one big voice that will finally bring peace to the Middle East and security to all the citizens of our countries.

Mr Mogens LYKKETOFT, Speaker of the Folketinget, Denmark

We are all scared by the increasing number of conflicts and the social tension in our countries. It is a huge challenge for the political establishment to overcome and meet people's concerns and roll back the extreme and aggressive feelings of nationalism and xenophobia. What is required to do that? I reflected on that in my initial remarks yesterday, but at its core is the need for the political establishment in our countries and regional organisations, especially the European Union, to deliver what people want from us.

It is doubtful that austerity policies will ever be able to create economic balance, and the risk is that we will create greater social imbalance. Perhaps the only sustainable route to balanced pockets is a more ambitious, more co-ordinated policy on creating jobs and growth on our continent.

All the conflicts and challenges before us require a strengthening of regional co-operation and understanding that they will never be solved by one of the single parliaments represented here.

I wish to underline that we thought that with the world being more interdependent and economically linked conflicts would be avoided because it would lead to loss if anyone tried to stir up conflict. Sadly, many wise people believed that up to 1914. It was a very integrated world at that time, but despite that, stupidly enough, people went to war. As I said yesterday, there are still sensible politicians in this world and on this continent who believe that the only way they can expand their interests is to cut the interests of other nations. That is an historically wrong observation.

We all believed after the end of the Cold War we would finally realise our common interest in creating democracy, employment and social development across the European continent. The cry from everyone here is that we return to that understanding as quickly as possible.

Mr Norbert LAMMERT, Speaker of the Bundestag, Germany

Obviously, we cannot change the world with a two-day conference. Nevertheless, an international conference like this one provides a relatively rare opportunity to speak very frankly and very openly and also very undiplomatically about the issues that matter in the world. At the beginning of 2014, we all said that it would be a great year because it marked the centenary of the start of the First World War and we were going to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and all the suffering and tragedy that they both caused throughout Europe.

But, I will be blunt with you, I would never have imagined that in 2014 we would witness a flagrant violation of the territorial integrity of a country in Europe. I am dismayed that some parliamentarians are seeking to justify and legitimise a violation of this kind. I admire all those who are trying openly to resolve the conflicts that exist. However, our first duty must be to defend the principles on which we as Europeans base our actions and on which we agreed following the traumatic experience of the two world wars.

We are discussing democracy, sovereignty, security and the majority principle. I would remind you of another obvious point: the very essence of democracy is not that the majority decides, but safeguarding the rights of minorities, which must not be questioned by the majority. All that is enshrined in our constitutions. The rights of minorities must be protected, and we sometimes have to be reminded that they must be guaranteed by parliaments.

As presidents and speakers of parliaments, our task is not to make sure that the majority gets its way because usually there are no causes for concern from that point of view, but to make sure that minorities also have a say. What worries me particularly is that in 2014, in the country holding the Council of Europe chairmanship, civil society and NGO representatives are in prison and the work of organisations defending the values of the Council of Europe is being hindered. We have to talk about these issues; it is absolutely vital.

Although this conference will not change the shape of the world directly, it will serve a purpose if we regard ourselves as the representatives of European democracy, if we take its principles and fundamental ideals seriously and if we are able to trust one another. There are countries which for varying reasons are in very difficult situations at the moment and I would stress that my country will show solidarity and support them in resolving the problems facing them as quickly as possible. However, we will do that in the most democratic way possible, as that is what we are committed to.

The Chair

If no one else wishes to speak, we will move on to theme three, which two of our colleagues, Mr Usupashvili and Ms Broekers-Knol, are going to introduce.