

Strasbourg, 24 September 2018

**Final speech by Mr Duarte Marques, new Coordinator of the Parliamentary Network on
Diaspora Policies of PACE**

Dear participants,

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for your great work today.

I also thank the members of the Sub-Committee on Diasporas of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for the trust they extended to me by asking me to assume the challenging responsibility of co-ordinating the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies of the PACE.

Throughout the day, we have discussed the role of national parliaments and the legal frameworks regulating the work of diasporas, governmental policies concerning diasporas and their implementation in co-operation with diaspora associations, as well as the co-operation of local authorities with diaspora associations.

We have agreed on the paramount role of diasporas and on the necessity for national and international stakeholders to engage and empower them, including as partners in the platform for co-operation policies with national and local authorities.

I am confident that the results of today's work will be useful for national and international organisations alike, in particular in respect to the role of parliaments in the development of the legal bases for cooperation with diasporas, the role of governments in creating the conditions for a greater contribution of diasporas to their countries of origin, as well as in respect of the cooperation between local authorities and diaspora associations.

Following these rich discussions, I would like to invite you to adopt the Final Conclusions, the draft of which has been distributed to participants.

If you have no objections, I suggest adopting the Final Conclusions by acclamation? Thank you.

We can therefore consider the Final Conclusions as adopted unanimously.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the current plans concerning the future activities of the Network. All your suggestions in this regard are mostly welcomed.

The work of the Network for the next year is foreseen to be centred on the organisation of two regional Seminars: one on "*Policies on diaspora participation in political life*", and second on "*Role of education in integrating migrants and maintaining cultural links with the country of origin through language teaching*"; one Conference, and of its second Annual Forum. If your national authorities are interested in hosting one of the regional Seminars or the Conference, or the Diaspora Annual Forum, you are very welcome to express yourself or to contact the Secretariat after this Conference.

Now, we have some time for an open discussion on the priorities and the future activities of the network and I encourage you to take floor and share your thoughts and suggestions.

Discussion.

Thank you dear friends, all your suggestions and ideas are well registered and together with the secretariat we will try to take them into account in our future work.

I would like also to inform you that, in order to allow more diaspora association to take part in the competition, the deadline for the applications to the European Diaspora Prize has been prolonged to the next year. The first European Diaspora Prize will therefore be awarded in 2019 during the Annual Forum, and we strongly encourage all interested diaspora associations to apply.

The Prize will reward the most outstanding diaspora association, established in one of the Council of Europe member States and with the best accomplishments in respect of supporting integration of diaspora members in host countries while promoting and fostering their cultural identity and developing links with and providing support to the countries of origin. The first Prize will be awarded to the most distinguished diaspora association during the next Annual Forum of the Network or on one of its regional meetings.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Network for Diaspora Policies, of the Sub-Committee on Diasporas of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and of the Parliamentary Projects Support Division of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as well as in my personal capacity, I would like to thank most warmly Mr Andrea Rigoni for his valuable work and dedication to the Diaspora Network.

Dear Andrea, your efforts and dedication have been instrumental to laying the basis of the Parliamentary Network and to giving a strong impetus for its prosperous future and to making it a genuine success story. I am convinced that I speak on behalf of all Network members when I extend to you our sincere gratitude for your contribution to creating and empowering this Network. I know that that the standards that you laid down for the work of the Network are very high, and I will do my very best to not disappoint the members of the Network.

For all of these reasoning, I would like to propose to nominate Mr Rigoni as Honorary Coordinator of the Diaspora Network. Is this proposal agreeable for you? Thank you very much.

Finally, it is with sincere gratitude that, I would like to thank Mr Arieu, Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Ukrainian delegation, for hosting this Conference. We will still have a chance to admire this beautiful city due to the city tour organised for us by the parliament and will enjoy a welcoming dinner offered by the Ukrainian national delegation.

Big thanks to our Swiss partners for their voluntary contribution which had made the work of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies, and hence the holding of this regional meeting, possible. I thank also the project "Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine" implemented by the Directorate General for Democracy of the Council of Europe for their support in organising this Conference.

I also thank very warmly all participants who came here today to share their experience and to discuss the fundamental issue of the role of diasporas and synergies with public authorities. Your active involvement made this Conference a success.

Thank you very much for your involvement in the work of the Network and I hope to see you all at its future events.