

## Summary

### **Theme 3 – Mobilisation of Parliaments against hate for inclusive and non-racist societies**

**Mr Norbert LAMMERT, President of the Bundestag, Germany**

**Ms Anne BRASSEUR, Ambassador of the No Hate Movement, Luxembourg**

**Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAIL, Speaker of the Dáil Éireann, Ireland**

**Mr Olemic THOMMESSEN, President of the Storting, Norway**

**Mr Mario LINDNER, President of the Bundesrat, Austria**

**Mr Ogtay ASADOV, President of the Milli Majlis, Azerbaijan**

**Ms Blanca ALCALA RUIZ, President of the PARLATINO**

**Mr Safet SOFTIĆ, Speaker of the House of Peoples, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Mr Andrej DANKO, Speaker of the Národná Rada, Slovak Republic**

**Mr Mario DI BARTOLOMEO, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Luxembourg**

**Ms Laura BOLDRINI, Présidente of the Camera dei deputati, Italy**

**Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL, President of the Eerstekamer, Netherlands**

**Mr Eduardo FERRO RODRIGUES, President of the Assembleia da República, Portugal**

**Mr. Faisal EL-FAYEZ, President of the Senate, Jordan**

**Mr Nicolaos VOUTSIS, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament**

**Ms Gloria Himelda FELIX NIEBLA, Cámara e Diputados, Mexico**

**Ms Eleanor LAING, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, United Kingdom**

**Mr Milan BRGLEZ, Speaker of the Drzavni Zbor, Slovenia**

**Mr Raphaël COMTE, Président of the Conseil des Etats, Switzerland**

**Mr Vicenç MATEU ZAMORA, Conseil General, Andorra**

**Mr Einar GUDFINNSSON, Speaker of the Althingi, Iceland**

## **Theme 3 – Mobilisation of Parliaments against hate for inclusive and non-racist societies**

### **The Chair**

Two colleagues have done us the honour of agreeing to introduce this Theme: Mr Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, and Ms Anne Brasseur, Ambassador for the Council of Europe's No Hate Movement and my predecessor as President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

#### **Mr Norbert LAMMERT, President of the Bundestag, Germany**

This is not a particularly pleasant subject to be tackling today, but we do need to talk about how we can mobilise parliaments to help in the fight against hatred, insults or unacceptable forms of speech that we do not wish to see in our respective parliaments.

We all appreciate that constructive debate, passionate debate even, is necessary in any parliament, and no one would wish to restrict that, but we know too that political debate made up of prejudice and stereotyping can ultimately only be a threat to the survival of democracy.

I am a German. So I know what I am talking about, and I know that these things had disastrous consequences in Europe and in Germany especially. In almost all our countries we are seeing a pattern of events in which politicians, journalists, activists and advocates of human rights are increasingly the target of invective and threats. The former mayor of the city of Cologne had a narrow escape from a knife-wielding attacker. And MP Jo Cox was assassinated during the Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom. All this shows very dramatically how a climate of extreme polarisation favours the emergence of fanatics who think they have the right to take the law into their own hands. In all these cases the aggressors expressly cite political motives, as if that could justify the use of violence. This is the main thing we have to debate and reach agreement on, I hope very quickly. Countries that uphold the rule of law have a duty to defend democracy, but cannot afford to respond in kind to the excesses with which they are confronted. But the danger is that they will lose credibility if they fail to help the victims of attacks and aggression. Looking at my own country, but not just my own country, I have the impression there is increasingly a mismatch between the amount of excessive rhetoric we hear and the timidity with which the judiciary deals with these cases. Those lodging complaints are faced with very lengthy proceedings, but if public opinion sees the judicial authorities as uninterested or powerless, that creates a very real problem and is very demoralising. You may have had the same impression in your countries: these things primarily affect people who are politically active on a voluntary basis, who do it not as paid work but in their own free time. They end up wondering if they should go on putting up with the situation.

I could mention a whole series of mind-boggling instances of excessive accusations, criticisms and extreme language. But I will just say that following a pronouncement by the Bundestag on the events in Armenia a century ago and the difficult relations thereafter between Armenia and Turkey, German members of parliament of Turkish origin who had contributed to the debate on the finding of genocide were criticised, vilified and threatened. Some have since needed permanent police protection because they are constantly being attacked and threatened.

I am telling you nothing new, ladies and gentlemen, if I say that social media have played a large part in this, not because they, along with the Internet, are the cause of this misguided thinking, but because they help to disseminate it.

In the digital world phenomena of this kind are spread in ways different from the ones we are traditionally used to. The limits of fairness and good taste are overstepped every day on the Internet; the limits of what is acceptable are tested daily and pushed back more and more. Since people are not held accountable for all these new excesses, a kind of race has arisen on the Web to see who can be the most virulent.

There is of course a difference between condoning violence and perpetrating it, but let us be under no misapprehension – we should be extremely concerned by the rate at which the limits are being pushed back, the speed at which barriers are disappearing.

Nor should we forget that hand in hand with new media use there is also a new audience. Traditionally we had a written press with its own readership, but its impact on public opinion is markedly declining,

whilst at the same time the influence of the Internet and the opinions expressed there is increasing. The Internet is a huge virtual space where people can exchange views, set themselves up as self-proclaimed experts and have that status confirmed by other surfers' mouse-clicks.

I find it both interesting and alarming that in Germany the press, part of which has quite a good reputation, is gradually giving up or reducing its online presence because the prevailing style and manner of Internet communication is not compatible with the reputation of the traditional media. So the press presence is reduced. Other media, however, are expanding their online presence more and more. In politics, rather than talking simplistically about friends or enemies, one should talk about "competing" points of view, because all views are legitimate provided they are democratic and all disputes should be resolved through dialogue, peacefully.

Something else that has changed: in the past, there was debate between rival parties or movements. Present-day discussion takes place increasingly between the general public and elites, between the establishment and those who, supposedly, are never allowed a voice. Thus in that great and long-established democracy, the United States, Donald Trump purports to speak for the people as a presidential nominee. All that shows us how huge the challenge is, for stable democracies too. Our job is to observe this trend, but also to rein it in. That starts in our parliaments, this is where we must be clear, where we must be honest and open about the style of debate permitted and the lines that absolutely cannot be crossed. We must use every opportunity to show clearly what we expect from democratic societies.

One example I would cite is the initiative taken by our Czech colleagues at the conference on antisemitism held in Prague. Presidents and members of parliament issued a joint appeal for all of us together to distance ourselves from the narrative of excess heard in the streets and on the Internet. A declaration on action against antisemitism and other hate crimes was adopted and published, and I urge you to read it to see exactly what it was all about.

In Germany, for reasons very clear to me, there has for years been a centre of research into antisemitism which studies causes and solutions. We should seize every opportunity to exchange views on this topic.

A final observation, if I may, on political competition. Passionate and committed debate must be protected against violence, excess and prohibited forms of narrative. It is our duty, the duty of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary to ensure this. It is our job to frame the law, to oversee compliance with it and to remedy any shortcomings. But it is not the job of parliament alone. Every free and democratic society also has an obligation to act against hatred. To our mind there can be no doubt about that. And even where there appears to be merely a threat of hatred, it must be resolutely opposed in all circumstances.

**Ms Anne BRASSEUR, Ambassador of the No Hate Movement, Luxembourg**

I would like to thank my successor, Pedro Agramunt, for having asked me to participate in your conference. I am honoured and pleased to be on this panel with President Lammert, whom I want to congratulate on his excellent presentation and his sharp analysis of the phenomenon of the worrying situation today, where hate helps extremists and populists to endanger our democratic system.

After my presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly, Secretary General Jagland appointed me as an Ambassador of the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Movement. This movement against hate speech and for human rights and freedom of speech online was created thanks to the initiative of the youth representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe after the terrifying attacks in Oslo and Utøya, Norway, on 22 July five years ago, when the lives of 77, mostly young, people were lost.

When the campaign was launched in 2013, the imminent threat that hate speech poses to our common human rights and democratic values was little understood. It was even questioned whether the campaign did not risk limiting the new online opportunities we as European citizens had to express ourselves. Together with the youth campaigners I believe that hate speech can lead or even justify violence and lead to hate crime – as we saw in Norway and in the UK when our fellow MP was murdered, to which Mr Lammert referred. Hate speech undermines the safety of those targeted and limits their possibilities to express their thoughts, participate and be a full member of society.

The movement, which is part of the Council of Europe's action plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, has been able to mobilise youth organisations and governmental partners in 43 countries, raising awareness about the impact of hate speech and how to combat it through human rights education, youth events, street actions and an online media campaign.

During my presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe I pushed for the establishment of an alliance of parliamentarians against hate speech. One of the aims of the alliance is to encourage national parliaments to set up "No Hate" committees, which our colleague Laura Boldrini did in Italy. It is an example we should follow in our parliament. I think this is more necessary than ever and as parliamentarians we should, despite our political differences, take up our responsibility and together draw a red line and put the heart of our logo in place and say no to hate.

The movement should go beyond the political sphere. I asked representatives of sports organisations to join the movement, and I had the honour of Pope Francis's support. Yesterday, the Dalai Lama joined the movement.

Unfortunately today we see more and more forms of hatred and racism in our societies. The target groups are usually the same – minorities: women, LGBTIQ people, refugees, Roma, Muslims, Jews, and those who are considered as being "others". We have to focus our thoughts on how parliaments and parliamentarians can participate in playing a preventive role.

Three elements put our democratic systems under threat: poverty, corruption and hatred. My speech will cover four areas that we should think about and debate, with the aim of mobilising parliaments and parliamentarians against hateful and racist societies forming in our member States.

First, we can respond publicly using tools of the Council of Europe. ECRI recommendation 15 calls on political leaders to reject quickly and publicly the public expression of hate speech. It calls for a debate within a framework of human rights. Parliamentarians should provide space in public debates to voices of minorities and those that are targets of hate speech. We can empower and support members of society to speak up. By doing so, we seek to ensure pluralism in the public debate and opinion forming.

Secondly, we must focus together in accepting the European idea in order to improve access to social rights to all. European decision making has not done enough to bring access to social rights to all. The idea of fixed term employment is disappearing and housing and unemployment benefits are becoming scarce. There is a need to call for more human rights and more social rights, especially for those who find it difficult to cope and seek answers. This includes rural communities and disadvantaged neighbourhoods in major cities. As parliamentarians we should promote the instruments that give guidelines to local and national authorities to improve access to social rights for all.

There needs to be a political call for more solidarity between members of our national communities and between European societies. Social unrest in one community or especially at the level of the nation affects all of us, and we should be aware of that.

Thirdly, how do we as parliamentarians contribute to the prevention of terrorism and extremism? We must support alternative human rights narratives to hate speech using the instruments available through our institutions.

We must reclaim public debate by underlining the values of unity and equality, and an open society in which diversity is a strength. We must stop blaming a complete community for the actions of a few.

We must strengthen human rights education, a tool to empower youth to reject hate speech and anti-democratic and discriminative dangerous narratives that underlie hate speech and offer quick-fix, even violent, radical solutions that do not work. We published a manual on combating hate speech online through youth education, and copies are available outside. I ask you to take them back to your national parliaments and hand them to your education committees in order to persuade governments to include this subject in the curriculum. One of our main targets is the education of young people.

Finally, I encourage you to join and actively support the NHSM youth campaign and encourage your parliamentarians to sign up to the No Hate Alliance of the Parliamentary Assembly. You yourselves can sign up outside the Chamber and take a badge back home.

I invite those countries that not have joined the campaign yet to do so as soon as possible. I invite all countries to continue their support for the campaign, in the face of present social concerns and unrest owing to the refugee influx; a clear stance against hate speech is needed.

Yesterday, we had a debate on migration. I sometimes hear it said, "We take refugees if they are Christians." That is not Christian, and we cannot accept it. I invite parliament presidents to speak out against hate speech and hate crime every day in their work and to support the action days of the campaign, particularly on 22 July. Mr Thommessen, Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament, is here. Norway actively supports this campaign, and with PACE's support we shall have a Europe-wide action day in support of victims of hate crime.

My message as Ambassador of the No Hate Speech Movement is: let us be stronger than racism, fear and hate. We must act together to say no to hate. If we fail, we help the gravediggers of our democratic societies.

### **The Chair**

Thank you, Madame Brasseur, for your statement. That concludes the introductions to our debate. I remind the speakers that they have five minutes in which to make their speeches.

### **Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAIL, Speaker of the Dáil Éireann, Ireland**

May I pay tribute at the outset to Mr Lammert and Madame Brasseur not only for the valuable work they are doing but for their interesting, incisive and, indeed, illuminating contribution to the debate?

I wish to take this opportunity to underline Ireland's commitment to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. All members of our societies, irrespective of their race, colour, descent, nationality or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, must be treated equally in law and in practice.

Events such as the global economic crisis, the refugee and migration crisis and the rise of extremism have created new tensions, fuelled new fears and, in some cases, exacerbated existing intolerances. The circumstances leading to the increased consideration of these issues are regrettable, but our important discussion today provides an opportunity to lend our support to the promotion and protection of key rights such as freedom of belief, freedom of expression and freedom of the media. It is incumbent on political leaders and decisions makers to do everything possible to prevent and respond to manifestations of hatred and intolerance, including through legislation, public policies and regional and international co-operation. I urge all of us to lead by example and strive to achieve concrete targets to address and challenge the scourge of hatred and intolerance.

Civil society participants have an important role in building tolerant, inclusive societies and in holding governments across the globe to account, especially regarding laws and policies to combat racial discrimination and intolerance. We must lead by example and foster a safe working environment in our parliaments, in our communities and in our countries at large.

Ireland has prioritised the promotion of civil society space, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights defenders because of the important role of civil society and our concern regarding the increasing restrictions on these actors. I am particularly proud of the role Ireland has played in promoting inclusivity and tolerance.

In recent years, Ireland has taken a journey as it seeks to build consensus and create a fairer, more caring environment in which we can all live in harmony and concord: a country we can all call home; a country we can be proud of; a country where all can feel welcome; and a country where difference can be respected.

Perhaps that road has best been shown in recent years in the distance travelled by the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Ireland – a road that began with the decriminalisation of homosexuality as recently as 1993, to the celebrations in Ireland and throughout the wider world in 2015 as Ireland became the first country to introduce equal marriage status by way of popular vote. A mindset was changed in less than a generation as Ireland sought to treat all its

citizens fairly and respectfully: young and old, urban and rural, gay and straight – a kaleidoscope of colours to be treated with the respect and dignity we all deserve and which we must strive to promote. To link the debate today with yesterday's debate on migration, may I give you a brief example of an experience I had this week? The Chinese ambassador to Ireland and I visited a small school in a rural area that I had attended myself. When I did so, it was a monocultural school reflecting the Ireland of which it was part. This week, the Chinese ambassador was happy to greet many students from his own country, part of a cohort of 26 different nationalities.

It is by embracing and accepting multiculturalism that we can achieve integration, and through that we will most successfully avoid hatred and intolerance.

### **Mr Olemic THOMMESSEN, President of the Storting, Norway**

Two years ago I stood at this podium and addressed the Assembly on almost exactly the same theme. I had been asked to speak in the debate on the draft resolution on Counter-action to manifestations of neo-Nazism and right-wing extremism. The Assembly called for 22 July to be made a day of remembrance for victims of hate crime.

The day of remembrance was proposed by the No Hate Speech Movement, the Council of Europe's youth campaign. Weeks prior to that, then President Brasseur and I jointly supported the initiative. It was clear to us that three years after the terrible massacre in Norway in 2011 hate was continuing to kill; it still does.

Today, the refugee and migrant crisis has further inflamed manifestations of hatred and hate speech, which stifles debates and leads to the alienation and possible radicalisation of those targeted. Well-functioning democracies depend on societies in which every individual feels welcome and has an active role to play. Hate bars the way to this, dividing rather than uniting, alienating rather than including.

We all recognise that we have a special responsibility to speak up against hatred. As Presidents of Parliaments we are well placed to expose the advocates of hate and fight their rhetoric. What does that mean? How can we fight advocates of hate? How can we fight their rhetoric? Let me give you a few suggestions.

We should lead by example. We must speak out and let the public know that as Presidents of Parliaments we will make visible and forceful stands against hate speech. This is particularly important during elections. As Presidents of Parliaments we should guide and remind politicians to campaign with dignity and respect for all groups on society. We should hold our governments accountable, ensuring that necessary awareness-raising and educational measures are put in place.

We should support and defend victims of hate speech and hate crime by recognising and actively defending the right to participate in society without being exposed to hatred, racism and xenophobia. We should meet new immigrants and minority groups with genuine interest rather than fear and distrust. We can invite and inspire them to become active citizens in our democracies. Fear triggers hate; distrust leads to alienation.

We should support our young people when they stand up against hate and racism. Their efforts are perhaps most important.

Madame Anne Brasseur is now the Ambassador of the No Hate Speech Movement. We should all act as ambassadors for this campaign in our respective countries. The contact I have had with the Norwegian chapter of the movements has been of great value to me and I know it means a lot to the campaign to have the support of national political leaders.

The core of our responsibility as politicians is actively to create a sense of belonging for all individuals in our countries. We cannot allow hate speech and xenophobia to flourish. There is no room for this in democracies based on values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

### **Mr Mario LINDNER, President of the Bundesrat, Austria**

Hatred, exclusion and discrimination are subjects which the Council of Europe has been addressing for a long time. Initiatives such as the No Hate Movement have drawn attention to issues we come up against every day. This conference represents one step further. In the last few months in Europe we

have faced a fresh wave of fear. The economic crisis, cowardly acts of terrorism, international conflicts forcing hundreds of people to flee their homeland, all these things have greatly unsettled our populations. Very often they no longer trust the politicians to find solutions to the challenges that face us. And in many countries, regrettably, there is a political class and parties which are destabilising matters further.

Europe's history has taught it the painful lesson that hatred and destabilisation always have consequences. Hate and fear are a preliminary to physical, political and psychological violence. The Internet daily shows us what that can lead to. The social media daily challenge rules we have framed to ensure a sensible way of living. Members of the public are unsettled and look for scapegoats in the shape of migrants, refugees, homosexuals, anyone who is different, who thinks differently. They make their hate-filled comments with impunity and above all with never a thought for the consequences suffered by their victims. We cannot ignore this trend. The Internet shapes the everyday life of a lot of people. So we need to take an interest in this hate and this intolerance in cyberspace. In recent years the Austrian Parliament too has taken a number of measures in an effort to stop fear and destabilisation becoming a permanent online presence.

We backed the No Hate campaign, but notwithstanding the many initiatives and projects implemented we have learned one important thing: politics has only a limited influence on how our citizens behave. Laws and prohibitions can never resolve all the problems in this field. We can of course prohibit incitement to violence on the Internet, but that will not change the hatred people feel.

It is precisely for this reason that, as a member of parliament and a democrat, I am absolutely convinced that in this fast-moving digital world of ours we have to find other ways of combating fear, hatred and discrimination. We need the help of civil society here.

I am convinced that we have a duty to create a new climate in politics. People must be helped to resist hatred and intolerance themselves, both online and in everyday life. If we are not to find ourselves voting laws to ban what should come under freedom of expression, the public must stand up and be counted. We must not remain silent in the face of online hate speech, we must react, we must all show the necessary civic courage.

Barbara Prammer, a former president of the Austrian National Council, said a few years ago that we should constantly cite courage, and civic courage, as means of improving the situation. Civil society and citizens with courage are our partners in this undertaking, and this is our chance to fight against exclusion and racism and to work for a society that stands together. As parliamentarians it is our job and our duty to encourage these brave citizens to support them. They are the guarantors of a Europe that has learned the lessons of its history.

#### **Mr Oqtay ASADOV, President of the Mlli Mailis, Azerbaijan**

Combating hate and racism is a battle as old as humanity itself and a severe test for us. It has to be said that greater economic development has not made the world any safer. Erosion of the moral values created by human civilisations over the centuries has helped to weaken the moral fibre of our societies and to worsen the global crisis.

Adverse developments in different regions of the world have fostered the growth of radicalism, religious intolerance and extremism and have produced other negative tendencies – discrimination, racism, xenophobia and islamophobia – leaving us with a feeling of despair.

In my view, much depends on co-operation by parliaments, either bilaterally or within international organisations. The strengthening and broadening of interparliamentary co-operation can make a real contribution to joint efforts aimed at making our planet a friendlier place. Our parliaments must reaffirm their commitment to resolving international problems. It is time to say that, whilst it is important to promote tolerance in each country, that is not enough: there must be mutual respect, equality in our societies and nations between different ethnic groups. That is crucially important for our civilisations.

Azerbaijan, which I represent, has been home to many cultures for centuries; all these cultures harmoniously enrich each other, and adherents of different faiths have always been able to live together as neighbours and friends in my country. There is a tradition of tolerance, of multiculturalism, that is a treasured resource of ours, and this tradition is also national policy, a way of life in Azerbaijan. My

country is one of the world's multicultural centres. Azerbaijan pursues a policy which is exemplified by its society and which shows how deep-rooted this multiculturalism is. We have an established track record here. 2016 is the year of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. It was our President who chose the designation. The aim is greater solidarity amongst our men and women, with the country hosting major international events attended by people from all manner of backgrounds. We have made our country into a meeting place for civilisations. I have also heard that Pope Francis may be coming to Azerbaijan at the end of the year. That would be a second visit by the Pope to my country.

Systematic and routine measures are in place to ensure equality amongst all those living in the country and to safeguard the religious values of the various faiths; our synagogues, our churches, our temples are open to all. Religious freedom is guaranteed. The different religious communities uphold the same interests for the country as a whole. In this regard, attempts to mask the hostile policy under the veil of religion pursued by Armenia against my country have no grounds. For 25 years now, 20% of territory of Azerbaijan, namely Nagorno-Karabakh plus seven adjacent territories, have been occupied. These territories have been subject to ethnic cleansing, with a million civilians expelled by Armenia from occupied Azerbaijani territory. Sadly, international efforts to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict have been unsuccessful, due to the unhelpful, indeed destructive attitude of Armenia. Everyone needs to understand that the status quo surrounding this dispute and the failure to resolve it are a real threat to peace and stability not only in the South Caucasus but for the entire world. This has been apparent once again in the escalation of fighting along the line of contact, new armed provocations by Armenian troops, new settlements, and exchanges of heavy artillery fire. Azerbaijan was forced to react in order to protect civilian lives.

Nowadays it should be a universally accepted idea that closing an eye to ethnic separatism, one nation's aggression, is a real danger for the whole planet. I believe the international community should indicate clearly, once and for all, where it stands on every conflict, including that in Nagorno-Karabakh. The issue absolutely must be resolved in strict compliance with international law, and with particular regard for the integrity of sovereign states.

I should like to draw your attention to one point. In recent times we have seen force prevail internationally rather than the law. That is an extremely dangerous trend. We must watch this, we must resolutely oppose this phenomenon.

**Ms Blanca ALCALA RUIZ, President of the PARLATINO**

It is truly an honour for me to address you on behalf of the Mexican Senate but also in my capacity as President of Parlatino, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament.

I must express our gratitude for the many efforts you make in your countries to tackle these highly complex questions which are rife with paradoxes, advances and retreats, and which demand ever-greater effort on the part of politicians.

I would like to share my views with you. I first wish to applaud the words of Mr Lammert and Ms Brasseur. I agree with many of the comments I have heard. In my country and in my region we are determined to do what it takes to combat these old and new manifestations of intolerance, which are unfortunately proliferating in various parts of the world. Sadly, no region of the world is immune to the phenomenon.

Nelson Mandela said that no one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin or his religion; people must learn to hate, and these sentiments are also the product of prejudice and ignorance. So we must make sure that such behaviours are not reproduced in families, in schools, in churches and other places, or in the social media. We are witnessing new forms of exclusion and intolerance claiming new victims, sometimes lives, as here in Europe. Racial supremacy is an absurd notion, devoid of all scientific basis. Science has shown that human beings have many attributes in common regardless of which continent they come from. All these prejudices are cultural, and rooted very often in ignorance. Hate speech feeds on ignorance. And it has to be said that, sadly, our countries have not been good enough at combating such behaviour.

Like the United Nations, we must acknowledge that there is a link between poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion, radicalisation and extremism. Failure to condemn that publicly, failure to act, can only encourage further hatred and discrimination. For that reason we must review our legislation on a regular

basis and ensure that we are doing all we can for victims, that we are not restricting the rights of certain groups, that all really are treated equally in our societies.

There is no moral justification for discriminating on grounds of religion or supposed superiority. At the same time we have to realise that the state cannot do everything.

All too often, populists use this supposed superiority to justify their actions and narratives. They claim that certain things are detrimental to economic growth. But where there is no ambition, when we aggravate differences, exploit the weakest, we sow the seeds of hate speech.

In my country, and in Latin America generally, we have become concerned about migrants living in the USA, including those legally there who are attacked and targeted by verbal abuse. We think that this narrative draws its legitimacy from ignorance. We should worry about the consequences of narratives based on stereotyping, which encourage intolerance in the United States.

We must protect those most exposed to racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, like migrants, refugees and foreigners with no legal status – I would add women, minorities and often indigenous populations.

Parliamentarians the world over should take up the challenge of eradicating these phenomena.

Another important phenomenon, as Jürgen Habermas said, is that many citizens do not recognise other people's right to equality. This is not just a problem of intolerance towards minorities, but very often one of intolerance between minorities too. In my region efforts are being made to remove undeserved privileges, prerogatives long enjoyed by some in our societies. There ought not to be any distinction between citizens in one and the same society. In Mexico, for example, we have adopted some parts of the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and the Council of Europe decision on xenophobia and intolerance, but we are focusing more on the causes of these phenomena. I think we should make sure that marginalised groups are well represented in parliament. Our parliaments should adopt interinstitutional measures, because this fight against intolerance concerns us all.

We in the Mexican Parliament are convinced that hate speech and narratives advocating violence must be stamped out, and it must be acknowledged that we are all equal without hatred and without fear.

### **Mr Safet SOFTIĆ, Speaker of the House of Peoples, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

How can we mobilise parliaments against hate speech and in favour of inclusive, non-racist societies? The fight against hate speech based on national origin, race, religion or any other reason occupies a very special place in the daily lives of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens. It is a veritable threat to society which is recognised by international institutions. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe it is essential to have a real and effective mechanism for combating this phenomenon. Generally speaking, freedom of expression is a close relative of hate speech, because it sometimes concerns ideas that are unpopular, words that may shock, annoy, disturb. Many international agreements not only allow the prohibition of hate speech but insist on it. The dignity and equality of all individuals is fundamentally safeguarded by the human rights systems at an international level. It therefore goes without saying that international law must clearly condemn any challenge to the equality of human beings. If we do not act vigorously against this phenomenon we shall only aggravate the divisions in society and facilitate the formation of social groups which impose their will on others. But if we respond to hate speech we can anticipate incidents and take preventive action.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with international rules, has adopted a series of laws on hate speech. Established institutions are required to act against it. They must combat hatred and international intolerance. We have taken many legislative measures. Our criminal code may not explicitly use the expression "hate speech", but it is covered by the code's rules on incitement to hatred and intolerance, incitement to religious and national hatred. In May 2016 we adopted a declaration on hate speech. Obviously, there is a strong institutional framework for combating hate speech. But statistically it is rarely penalised. This is apparent from the figures of the institutions responsible for safeguarding human rights and implementing these measures against hate speech.

Why is the level of prosecutions so low? The answer lies in staffing and funding problems. In terms of rules, hate speech must unquestionably be punishable. In Bosnia and Herzegovina we are legislating to that end on the basis of international standards. But unfortunately there are no effective measures in place. The institutions responsible for human rights need to be properly financed. Steps should also be taken to improve staff recruitment. Unfortunately budget cuts have been made here, when what is needed is greater action to counter hate speech.

People need to be aware of the danger of hate speech. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is insufficient awareness of the danger. So the media, educational establishments, indeed all institutions and the state-run institutions in particular, along with civil society, need to increase awareness of this scourge. Everyone who speaks, especially in public, must be accountable. We have already seen that democratic models are inspired by what is said, and that unfortunately the man in the street listens to what the politicians say and some of them turn away from politics because it no longer interests them. In our country we think that this scourge of hate speech can be fought more effectively if we raise awareness of the danger it poses and the consequences of it.

The law enforcement agencies, the police in particular, do not have specialist teams to investigate hate crimes, although these crimes are actually far more numerous than official statistics would suggest.

Acts prompted by religious, national or racial differences are not prosecuted as hate crimes. They are prosecuted as ordinary offences. There is a red line in terms of freedom of speech that cannot be crossed. The Internet is indispensable to pluralism, but it is not necessarily a progressive medium if it spreads extremist opinions. One can but acknowledge that nowadays it is the principal platform for hate speech, but the state can no longer be entirely free to intervene and meddle in policing the Internet. In Bosnia and Herzegovina we have advocated greater awareness of the role of the media, a better understanding, a better reading of the media. It is vital to understand them in order to interpret their function. The need is not only to focus on the dangers of the Internet, but also to respect the fact that it offers us opportunities. It is a particularly creative tool for the young.

The shocking thing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that hate crimes are often committed by young people who were not even born at the time of the war. Which means that the new generation is already burdened by the nationalism and intolerance of the previous generation. In our country relations between the different populations are at best neutral. Unfortunately there is a rejection of minority groups and anyone who appears different from the majority. If vigorous action is not taken against hate speech, that aggravates the divisions in society and facilitates the formation of social groups which see themselves as superior to others and seek to impose their will, when an immediate response to hate speech would enable us to anticipate and prevent incidents.

In conclusion may I say, ladies and gentlemen, that I will do everything possible and imaginable to continue the fight against hate speech. I shall always speak out against it in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*(Mr Thommessen, Vice-Chair, took the Chair in place of Mr Agramunt.)*

**Mr Andrej DANKO, Speaker of the Národná Rada, Slovak Republic**

The chief reason for combating hate speech is the desire for what is right, defence of the values we believe in. We must be able to express those values and combat xenophobia.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you as Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, in which different nationalities are represented. We are experiencing difficult times and one of the questions being addressed at this conference is how to mobilise parliaments. Why do we need to? Because we Europeans need to address all topics of relevance to the European Union. We have recently had important events such as Brexit. Excessive ideas are expressed in the social media and we are seeing a rise in extremism and populism in Europe. Unless we join forces it will be very hard in future to keep those who support these movements at bay. It is important to identify the problems.

Everything starts from egoism. We all love our countries, naturally, but we Europeans need to be aware of the borderline between our national interest and the common interest. I am sure we are all agreed on the need to ensure co-operation in matters of security. At this very moment an informal meeting of EU leaders is taking place in Bratislava, Slovakia. And we have taken the initiative of calling a Summit of Speakers of Parliaments of the EU to which you are all cordially invited. We must get to know each

other, must share information, if we are to eradicate prejudice, if we want more dialogue with a view to changing Europe. I would urge the larger countries to show understanding towards us, the little countries. Show us more understanding and generosity. We have to know each other in order to appreciate our respective concerns and preoccupations. I am proud that Slovakia has a coalition government in which the Hungarian minority, which has known difficult times, is represented. This is the way to overcome historical difficulties.

Other presidents and speakers before me have described the problems in their countries. These messages must be heard, but we must not look to the past, we must focus on the present and look to the future. We must affirm our values in order to combat evil.

Allow me to make an appeal. I know that nationalism and populism are on the march in Europe, and I very much fear that nationalism will greatly damage the European Union. The EU has had periods of success. We must abandon negative thinking. In many European countries we need to modify our laws on political parties. We are parliamentary presidents and speakers, but I am also the chairman of a political party and I know how hard it is for voters to remain interested in political parties, given what is going on in Europe. We must convince our populations that evil is not punished by evil but by good. We all face the same shared challenge. The future for Europe lies in coexistence between large and small countries based on dialogue, understanding and mutual respect. I think that respect will be expressed at the forthcoming informal summit of speakers of the EU parliaments, in the interests of Europe.

### **The Chair**

Thank you, Mr Danko, for keeping to the time limit: five minutes is meant to five minutes.

### **Mr Mario DI BARTOLOMEO, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Luxembourg**

I have always held that what was excessive was unimportant. I have seen outbursts which I thought excessive, and I was sure they were so over the top that no one could take them seriously. The current explosion of verbal brutality and abuse has forced me to seriously rethink that position. Surely we cannot believe that all these attacks on minorities, outbursts in the world of politics and on the Net and veritable persecutions have no effect. By way of illustration, let us go back 75 years and remember the history of Jewish minorities and how they were persecuted in our regions.

The perpetrators were known, but those who simply looked on without asking questions were at the very least complicit in their crimes against humanity. The Government and Parliament of Luxembourg apologised a year ago to the Jewish communities for the mistakes made by part of the Luxembourg administration during this darkest period. They were right to do so. I hope that none of us, ladies and gentlemen, will in future need to apologise to minorities for failing to mobilise against disparagement, hatred, unfair accusations, persecution and violence that are often every bit as brutal as physical violence. We need to lead by example. As elected representatives of our people, we must avoid using language that is hurtful, simplistic, mendacious. We must speak out and take practical and legislative measures against these movements in our countries.

As a former journalist I am a fervent upholder of free speech, but freedom of thought and expression end when they do not respect the rights, integrity and honour of another person or another community. This is why in my country we prosecute outbursts on the Net in the same way as other outbursts. The former are just as hurtful as printed letters or words. They are more spontaneous, the authors have no time to think in the way they might do for a letter, but that is no excuse.

Faced with the rise of extremist and populist movements, our response cannot be just to dismiss them as “only” extremists and populists. Imitating them would be even more dangerous and irresponsible. No, we must confront the reasons behind their progress and put forward cogent responses to the simplistic answers they offer to real problems.

That, ladies and gentlemen, requires patience, a lot of hard work and above all courage, and it requires us to be approachable by our fellow-citizens.

**Ms Laura BOLDRINI, Présidente of the Camera dei deputati, Italy**

When Ms Brasseur was President of the Parliamentary Assembly she worked to promote a No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. She described how our Chamber of Deputies welcomed this initiative in Rome, with the help of member of parliament Milena Santerini, coordinator of the Alliance. It is a very important initiative. The racists, xenophobes, advocates of hatred are few in number, but they are very loud, very provocative, very in-your-face, very visible. So it is important to organise this front against hatred and to urge all parliamentarians to take up this civic struggle. I am grateful to President Brasseur for encouraging us to organise this No Hate Alliance.

We have also supported another Council of Europe initiative, the No Hate campaign, which was unveiled in Rome. Given that hate is toxic to our societies, that parliaments absolutely cannot cut themselves off from the real lives of our citizens, from what goes on in the day-to-day existence of every one of us, I have chosen to concentrate on the question of the Internet. I set up an ad hoc committee within the Chamber of Deputies which drew up a declaration of Internet rights. This says broadly that a crime is a crime, whether committed online or offline, that whilst freedom of expression is a hallowed right it has to be respectful of the dignity of others, of those who hold a different view.

We cannot tolerate harassment, aggression, the spread of lies designed to destroy a person's good name. All this online abuse is very often treated less than seriously. I tell you, the overwhelming majority of women holding public office are subjected to online abuse.

Tell me, ladies and gentlemen, why should all that be acceptable? We have our rights, hard-won rights, and why should we not respond to these constant humiliations on the Web? I find it totally unacceptable that our daughters should have to take themselves off the Web in order to be respected.

Some of our colleagues use hatred as a currency, hatred of foreigners, homosexuals, women. I say that quite openly because unfortunately I am a favourite target for these people. How can one brandish an inflatable doll at a public meeting and compare it to the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies? I am not joking. These things are not fun, they are not amusing, and we should not laugh. They are extremely serious. One day, this online violence crosses over into real life. I defy any of you to tell me that it has never happened in your country, that young people have not been driven to suicide out of shame, after being humiliated online. Online hatred intrudes into real life, even into political life. Our British colleagues know this only too well. Jo Cox fell victim to hatred of what she stood for as a woman, an activist and a member of parliament.

We cannot allow politics to take place in an arena, with all of us as gladiators using physical violence rather than the force of ideas. We must stop this dangerous development which damages the democratic system and feeds social tensions. For all these reasons I think it is important to tackle this issue. I urge you all to consider joint action against this threat, which is a threat to us all. A parliament can never do the job on its own. We must all work together on this.

**Ms Ankie BROEKERS-KNOL, President of the Eerstekamer, Netherlands**

Politicians have a major responsibility. We can choose either to inspire fear or inspire understanding. We are an example to the rest of the nation and we have a responsibility to promote a free, respectful and inclusive society.

One way of doing this is by publicly condemning the spread of hate and racism, not only against migrant groups but among migrant groups themselves. Recently there have been calls for rejection and isolation within Turkish migrant groups as a result of the attempted coup – a coup that was, of course, most objectionable. In the Netherlands, people who support the Turkish Government are in conflict with people who do not. This form of imported hatred has resulted in parents keeping their children home from school, out of either fear or hatred of “the other side”.

There is no place for this in our free, democratic societies. It even provides fertile ground for xenophobia. We should not raise youth with the hate that arises from foreign conflicts. I believe it is up to politicians to condemn this in our public statements. The things we teach our children form the foundation of our State.

However, the responsibility politicians have in condemning hate stretches further than our public performances. We should also be aware that the language and the arguments we use in our parliamentary debates send an important message to the population.

We as Presidents of Parliament play an important role in this. By determining what is – and what is not – allowed, we set an example.

Two years ago in Oslo, we spoke with one another about striking a balance between majorities and minorities. I stated that the acceptance of a legislative proposal should always be the result of a debate in which all arguments are heard and debated. I even said that, without this, a free democracy is an empty shell. I still believe this to be true. But in practice, "making sure all arguments are heard" can lead to difficult situations.

I will tell you what I mean by that. It concerns a balance we as Presidents of Parliament must all strike.

What happens if a political party chooses to use arguments in a parliamentary debate that inspire hatred towards a certain group in society? Do you allow the free democratic debate to run its course, knowing that although you may personally condemn these sentiments they are very much alive in your society and should be given the chance to be spoken out loud in a political arena?

Or do you ask the speaker to take back his or her words, knowing that parliament as a whole sets a certain standard and that the language of politicians influences the way people speak to each other in everyday life? This is perhaps the most difficult dilemma we as Presidents of Parliament have to deal with. It is important that we share our opinions, as we are today.

**Mr Eduardo FERRO RODRIGUES, President of the Assembleia da República, Portugal**

I am proud to be the President of a Parliament in which the political representation of hate and racism has no place. That does not mean that we do not suffer from racism in Portuguese society, but it is found among a very small minority.

I am proud to come from a country that has been commended by the United Nations for its immigrant integration. Portugal has examples of immigrant integration best practices that deserve to be disseminated and shared.

Historically, we are a country of emigrants, and we belong to a continent with a long history of emigration.

We know that the different European nations, at different moments, have not only had beautiful stories of welcoming immigrants: there have also been, unfortunately, stories of hatred and racism.

It was against that history that our Enlightenment ideals of human rights, freedom, equality and fraternity were affirmed. It was against that history that Europe was built. It was against that old history of hatred that a new European history of peace and development has been written in recent decades. This is something precious that we must care for every single day as if it were the first day.

We live in difficult times; times of transition are always times of uncertainty. Let us not be hindered by fear or cynicism. Let us not play the game of the populists by internalising their language and their arguments.

Please allow me to quote from a recent speech that I believe to be memorable: a speech by Michelle Obama. The First Lady of the United States said it all when she said: "when they go low, we go high".

That is exactly it: we must not yield, we must fight prejudices and be the best versions of ourselves – and always talk, maintain a dialogue, humbly, with those who suffer and those who feel that they have been forgotten.

These times of economic transition, this painful adjustment of globalisation, are indeed leaving too many people behind; they are removing the dignity owed to the world of work; these times are weakening social policies – and, for all of us who stand up for a social Europe, that cannot but be taken as a challenge.

Trade agreements cannot be signed at the cost of the European social and environmental model. Access to the European market involves respect for human rights and compliance with rules and norms approved by the member states. There is no free circulation of goods and products without the free circulation of people. There is no Europe without equality of rights among European citizens.

However, this free circulation of people must not serve to lower the labour and social standards of member States – on the contrary, it should serve to provide responses to employment opportunities and social mobility objectives.

My plea to this European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments is quite simple: let us fight hate and racism without giving in to populism. At a certain point, after repeatedly giving ground, it becomes difficult to tell democrats from xenophobic populists.

But this does not mean leaving people without answers – quite the opposite. Populists do not have the monopoly on people's concerns and expectations. They have false answers to real problems. Let us put forward our reasons and our arguments. Let us be tough not only on populism but on its causes.

**Mr. Faisal EL-FAYEZ, President of the Senate, Jordan**

It is a great pleasure to share with you some thoughts and reflections on the situation in our region from a Jordanian perspective.

Jordan, a close and immediate neighbour of Syria, was the first to face a massive refugee influx. During yesterday's debate, it was mentioned that only 653 000 Syrian refugees had been hosted in Jordan. The true figure is twice as many.

I am presenting a short summary of a longer and more comprehensive statement on the situation in our region that I left with the Secretariat for distribution. Please have a look at it.

I have tried to cover most of this meeting's agenda items. I am aware of the fact that I do not have sufficient time to cover the many points I wish to present. I will begin by addressing the present migration and refugee crisis, which is a direct outcome of the violence, instability and political chaos that has prevailed in our region for a long time.

This also applies to the rising waves of hatred, extremist trends and sectarianism. Only when waves of refugees turned up on European soil did the crisis catch the attention it deserved.

I regret to have to confirm your worst doubts about the situation; there are no prospects for a foreseeable end to the crisis hitting Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq. Neither is there hope for a breakthrough in the moribund talks relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the source of much regional uncertainty and instability.

Let us not talk about historical rights, or the rights and wrongs of history. A two-step solution is the only way out, and this will eliminate a major source of hatred in the region. All efforts in search of political settlements have failed, and all efforts to settle the conflicts on the battlefield have also failed. The outcome has been, and continues to be, death and destruction on a catastrophic scale. The chaos created the perfect breeding ground for the rise of terrorist organisations, which are now operating worldwide. What began as a genuine, popular uprising in most Arab countries against entrenched dictatorships – the so-called Arab Spring – unfortunately drew in interference and interventions from every direction. Legitimate local issues soon transformed into complex regional and international wars.

Jordan remains, and has always been, an oasis of peace, security and stability in the midst of a turbulent area, despite the economic challenges related to the regional anarchy. Our very scant resources are far too inadequate for Jordanians to cater for more than 2.5 million refugees and foreigners living in our country.

Jordan's stability has rested on three pillars. The first is the wise and astute Hashemite leadership, which has succeeded in keeping a country of various ethnic and religious social components united and harmonious as equal citizens. The second is the majority of Jordanian society that has experienced

considerable levels of democratic practice since the country was born. The third is the efficiency of our security forces.

We always hoped that our neighbours would share the benefit of the Jordanian experience that promotes the basic values of democracy, tolerance, ethnic and religious accord, equality before the law, equal opportunities for all, an independent judiciary, respect and a dignified life for all citizens and an education guaranteeing a 94% literacy rate.

Jordan is by no means a utopia, but we do our best to keep the wheel of gradual reform turning all the time. Unfortunately, security concerns, particularly in these unusual times, cause concerns, but we do try to maintain a reasonable balance. Our constant position on all the regional crises is to support any constructive effort for ending the grinding conflicts, establishing peace, starting reconstruction and creating representative democratic administrations in which all peoples can share in the decision making process. Once that is achieved, it will enable refugees to return to their homelands. This should apply to all the unstable States. None of this can be achieved without a massive international reconstruction plan for the entire region.

The last question I want to address is the mobilisation of parliaments against hate for inclusive and non-racist societies. I believe this question has been addressed in my distributed paper. I would add that the ugly manifestations that plague all our societies such as hatred, xenophobia, racism, desperation, violence, extremism and the resulting ruthless and self-destructive terror are symptoms of deeper causes. Our attention should be focused on the root causes, not only the symptoms.

Our world is full of injustice, poverty, ignorance, backwardness – often famine – violent conflicts, lawlessness, disease and terror. There are few places left where people can feel safe. Billions, even trillions, of dollars are wasted on destructive wars, but little is earmarked for the preservation of peace and useful development.

Despite all efforts – inter-religious dialogue, interfaith societies, investigations, reconciliation attempts and the preaching of endless engagement of peoples across borders – the drift to violence and desperate action unfortunately continues. The root causes have largely been ignored; mostly we resort to security and practical preventive measures to combat terror, but this will not be enough. The terrorist will continue to invent counter-measures unless we can together eliminate the forces that drive people to kill themselves and other in cold blood. The number of suicide bombers is steadily on the rise, which is an indication that the cause is gaining force. It is the responsibility of us all to act, and to act quickly.

The task ahead is huge. Parliaments can indeed play a powerful role, but it begins by first recognising that the problem – a very serious problem – exists in the first place.

#### **Mr Nicolaos VOUTSIS, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament**

I agree entirely with Mr Lammert and Ms Brasseur, and more especially with the idea that there is a direct link between democratic rights and social rights. I agree too that politics has a direct responsibility. It is the democratic deficit that is to blame for the rise in racism. Our role is crucial. We see that politics is often less influential than rating agencies or multinationals. Rating agencies bring down governments and damage countries. Democratic dialogue is in retreat. The Internet and social media, instead of enhancing true democratic debate, value sound-bites, short catchphrases, malicious tweets, over proper political deliberation. Democracy is in retreat, poverty is on the increase. It is a breeding ground for intolerance, hate, racism and xenophobia.

In Greece, as you know, we have had two crises to cope with at the same time – the financial crisis which caused much anguish, fear and social fragmentation, and the crisis over the large numbers of migrants and refugees coming to Greece. All this has created a climate in which there is a degree of acceptance of hate speech, even sometimes in parliament. I have heard migrants talked about there as if they were the scum of the earth, as if they were not members of society like anyone else. There was even a demand in our parliament that food hand-outs should be for Greeks only. There have also been instances of pogrom-like violence. These events are all prompted by nationalist or pro-fascist political forces that are perfectly well known.

But I remain hopeful. The battle we have waged in Greece, in our society, has defeated these forces, and the values of solidarity have triumphed. And our laws are very progressive on many of the issues

we are discussing today. Laws have been enacted and we are taking the necessary steps to enforce them, so that hate speech cannot survive and that everything is done to ensure that this phenomenon is rejected by society, and by the courts too.

So I am reasonably optimistic. I am less hopeful generally about joint action by Europe. It is evident that these successive crises have meant less democracy, fewer common policies. I hope that this debate, our meetings and our shared understanding will lead us to take a different path.

**Ms Gloria Himelda FELIX NIEBLA, Cámara e Diputados, Mexico**

Firstly I must thank you for allowing Mexico to attend this conference as an observer and in the event to be present at such an important debate, which concerns the international community as a whole. Hatred has to be resisted, we have to strive for more inclusive societies. Mexico along with all other countries has a duty to act against xenophobia, discrimination, racial hatred and all forms of intolerance, and to facilitate national and international dialogue on these issues.

Mexico's position is somewhat different from that of the European countries when it comes to refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons, because of our country's geography. Even so, we have become a country of transit for people arriving from Central and South America en route to the USA, who are very vulnerable in terms of their safety but also with regard to the law. They are at risk along the whole length of their journey, which can sometimes be more than 2 500 kilometres before they reach our borders. There is also a problem with migrants who fail to get into the USA or are expelled and then seek permanent residency in Mexico. Many of them fall victim to kidnappers, thieves, extortionists. Unfortunately there is no single authority with responsibility for migrants. The Migration Department, but also security, the police, the health services and the judiciary are all involved, together with other interlocutors, not forgetting civil society as a whole. We ought to coordinate the various stakeholders better.

The transit of undocumented migrants has become an international problem. It affects the countries of origin – El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua – the transit countries, Mexico and Guatemala – and the destination country, the United States.

Co-operation needs to be not just regional but international. There is also the question of those who have migrated to the USA who have, in the course of the election campaign, been the target of anti-migrant rhetoric by one of the candidates, regardless of whether their status is legal or not. It is important to stop this narrative of intolerance because there is a link between hate speech and hate crimes. A climate is taking shape which legitimises violence on grounds of nationality, race, religion or sexual orientation against migrants, activists, minorities and, generally speaking, anyone perceived as different from the supposed norm. Hate speech is intended to intimidate such persons or to stir up public prejudice against them. So we need laws which criminalise hate speech. One view is that it should be penalised only where there is violence. Personally, I like the liberal tradition of John Stuart Mill: we should avoid the "tyranny of the majority" and defend freedom. People must be accountable for what they say. But the social media must be aware of their power for good or ill. They can secure new rights, but they can also light fires that are hard to extinguish. Europe remembers the mayhem wrought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by those who preached hatred. So we must work a lot harder to counter it. In our parliaments too we must do our utmost to foster political co-operation amongst our brothers and sisters in the interest of us all.

**Ms Eleanor LAING, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, United Kingdom**

I thank President Lammert and Madame Brasseur for their inspirational introductions to this important debate.

The No Hate Speech Movement is really important. I congratulate Madame Brasseur on all the work she has done so far and on bringing it before this forum today. We must all work to ensure that the campaign succeeds. We are particularly impressed, Madame Brasseur, by the fact that the campaign is not just words but actions. The book I am holding is a tremendous piece of work and I will certainly take it back to my parliament and put it before the relevant committees for action, not just words, to stop hate crime. I thank all those who will follow that example.

I thank Laura Boldrini for all her work and for what she said this morning, and in particular I thank the Italian Parliament for naming its Committee on Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racism and Hate Crime in memory of my late colleague Jo Cox.

If I may, I should like to say a few words about Jo Cox. As I talk of her, I can see her standing to speak in her usual place in the House of Commons wearing a vibrant, orange dress, full of vigour, full of ideas. She had a vibrant personality. She was a mother of two small children and she had so much to live for. Her maiden speech, made just over a year ago, has been much quoted. In talking about the diverse community in her constituency she said that we have “far more in common than that which divides us.” Jo’s brutal, cruel murder shocked us to the core. Jo has gone, but her legacy lives on, and we will keep it alive. I thank all of you who have talked about or thought of Jo today; let us always keep her memory in our minds, so that we never forget the eternal vigilance necessary to defeat hate speech and hate crime.

Last week, I walked past a statue in Trafalgar Square, London, erected in the memory of another young woman killed while doing good work. One hundred years ago, Edith Cavell, a nurse, saved the lives of soldiers on both sides of the Great War. She was executed by firing squad. On her memorial statue, her last words are written: “Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness for anyone.”

I mention that to illustrate that 100 years ago it was thought to be remarkable that a young woman should say that in those circumstances. Have we not come a long way in the generations since? We pledge today to keep going and to go further in the memory of Jo Cox and others who died while working for freedom and democracy.

Freedom of speech is vital to democracy and we must always defend it. Abuse of that freedom is indefensible. We must not be afraid to make more noise than those who preach hatred. This forum is very reserved – very quiet. When Laura Boldrini spoke earlier, I wanted to clap and cheer and to say “Yes, you’re right; yes, that is the message we must take from this important international gathering.” We should not be afraid to repeat that we are right and they – the cowards hiding behind the anonymity of social media inciting others to do violence in the name of hatred –are wrong. The good thing is that there are more of us than there are of them – many, many more. We can make more noise. We have shown in this forum today that people from countries across Europe agree that one of the challenges that we shall work to achieve is to defeat hate. We believe in tolerance and understanding, not just because there are more of us, and not just because we can make more noise than those who are wrong, but because we are determined and we know how to work together so that good prevails over evil.

### **Mr Milan BRGLEZ, Speaker of the Drzavni Zbor, Slovenia**

“Now is the time of monsters”. That was a profound thought by the famous Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci – one I could hardly agree more with, even though it was written well in the previous century. In this regard, Gramsci remains highly topical and nothing holds, I am afraid, truer at this very moment than this particular thought. None the less, I also remain convinced that now is also the time of great opportunities to build a new, better, more open society that has learnt significantly from its own mistakes.

Slovenia firmly believes in the interdependence of peace and security, development and human rights. We see respect for the latter important not only for the prevention of hideous conflicts but for durable positive peace and inclusive sustainable development. Human rights also hold an inseparable part of our Constitution, which was drafted 25 years ago at the birth of our country. Hatred, racism, rejection and exclusion represent some of the biggest contemporary threats to democracy and the rule of law, and when combined with a deteriorating economic situation they can and will produce horrific consequences.

To avoid historical mistakes, we must first and foremost understand that social inclusion does not only concern vulnerable groups but, in fact, concerns every single individual. Respect for and the promotion of human rights concerns the society as a whole. However, certain vulnerable or marginalised groups – such as children, the elderly, members of the LGBTQ community – require our special attention and focus. I am in this respect pleased to share with you that a law has recently entered into force in Slovenia granting same-sex couples equal civil partnership rights as those enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

Another overarching and cross-cutting question of the utmost importance concerning social inclusion is the position of young generations and their well-being in our societies. This is particularly important in contemporary Europe, where young people are becoming dangerously more susceptible to radicalisation. I therefore consider “Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture” an invaluable international reference and contribution to development processes in education and I pledge our support to the continuation of the project. It is our responsibility to identify and implement a wide range of positive alternatives for the youth, empower them and enable them actively to participate in political processes. In this regard, I wish to highlight the Positive Agenda for the Youth in the Western Balkans, which was launched at the Brdo Process Foreign Ministers meeting in April 2015 and affirmed at this year’s Paris Summit.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe plays an indispensable role in promoting more inclusive and hence more successful and peaceful societies. Its commitment to diminishing negative trends in hate speech, racism and intolerance, as well as to addressing sensitive topical issues such as the reception and integration of refugees and migrants is praiseworthy. Concrete projects such as the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and the now already 13 years old “Living Library” concept indeed represent important leaps from mere theory to on-the-ground practice that produce tangible effects.

What is the role for us, parliamentarians? Hate speech is one of the most powerful triggers of discrimination, especially because it is often difficult to identify and define. Nevertheless, we must all admit that it also occurs in our parliaments, and not seldom so. I find it particularly worrying that such speech often hides behind the populist veil of glamorous words of concerns for the national interests and the well-being of the nation.

Where can we, Presidents and Speakers of parliaments, contribute to a more thorough understanding of tolerance and inclusiveness among our fellow politicians? I am convinced that it is our professional and, above all, our moral duty instantly and decisively to react in every instance of hate speech, intolerance, and discriminatory exclusion performed in debates by our parliamentary colleagues. We have an obligation to make zero tolerance for such speech practices an integral part of our political cultures – within and beyond our parliamentary chambers.

We must be frank: tackling the foregoing challenges is by no means an easy task, particularly not for politicians, who sometimes do things primarily because we believe our electorate expects them from us. I believe, however, that we must step out of such frames of mind and realise that we have not received our mandates merely to satisfy the electorate in the short term, but also to take decisions that will improve our nations in the long term. Promoting free, open, tolerant and unconditionally inclusive societies is certainly one such project and I am proud to be one of its advocates.

**Mr Raphaël COMTE, Président of the Conseil des Etats, Switzerland**

How can we fight fear and ignorance? This is the question to be answered when we talk about combating hate and racism. Because hate and racism are born essentially of widespread fears or failure to understand “otherness”. Hating someone just because he is different cannot be the product of thought, of reasoned and intelligent analysis; it is giving in to instincts devoid of all humanity. This fear of otherness is nothing new, unfortunately. Everywhere and in every age, human beings have suffered prejudice and have had to fight for the very right to exist. This otherness can take a variety of forms. It can mean someone from another country, someone of a different skin colour, someone whose lifestyle is not that of the majority. Over the centuries many peoples, many religions have been discriminated against in ways each more unacceptable than the last, to a point where it seems sometimes that humanity is incapable of learning from history.

Faced with this reality, the development of human rights, in Europe especially, has brought some improvement to the situation. Our continent has succeeded in setting a benchmark for human rights and thus safeguarding the population as a whole, and minorities in particular.

The role of parliaments in this legislative exercise is a vital one, and as parliamentarians we must resolutely ensure that this heritage remains lasting and fruitful, because nothing is set in stone and our troubled world reminds us of the strong temptation which exists to turn in on ourselves and fail in our most basic duty of humanity. Wars, terrorism, unemployment, migratory flows, many events sow doubt in the minds of our fellow-citizens and can trigger rejection of others and otherness.

In 1995 a new article prohibiting racial discrimination was added to the Swiss Criminal Code. Incitement to racial hatred is not just an opinion like any other. Incitement to violence creates social unrest and the instigators of it must be held to account. This provision of Swiss criminal law is a curtailment of freedom of expression and one which is justified by the need to protect the lives and physical integrity of the persons targeted and to stop violence from becoming entrenched in society. The Swiss parliament is currently discussing whether to extend this rule to discrimination based on sexual orientation. But it is not enough to punish discrimination, we also need measures to prevent it happening. In schools, for example, by making children and young people aware of the need to be tolerant and to respect difference. Our colleague Anne Brasseur referred to this in her introductory presentation. In sports clubs or cultural associations, by bringing the different communities together irrespective of their origin or religion. In employment, by giving everyone the chance of career advancement. Politicians have an important part to play, and we parliamentarians have an important part to play too, not only by adopting laws but also by the way we behave.

As members of parliament, elected representatives of the people, our words carry weight and can influence society. If politicians engage in hate speech, why should members of the public hold back? We should all have the courage to try to build bridges between our peoples rather than putting up walls.

Politics is often the art of the possible. When it comes to combating hate and discrimination, we are often dealing with the art of the impossible. But that only makes our task more worthy and more essential. It is our job to build a society in which everyone can find his or her place, a society where present and future generations can thrive in all their richness and diversity, in a society full of colour, far removed from the grey fatalism of some of the political narratives currently in vogue.

Let us see our parliaments taking on the duty they rightfully owe to their public, but also to history.

**Mr Vicenç MATEU ZAMORA, Conseil General, Andorra**

In last year's report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the EU expressed concern at the rise of xenophobia and racism in Member States due, on the one hand, to recent terrorist attacks and on the other hand, to the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees. The report also shows the other side of the coin, pointing to the demonstrations of solidarity seen in response to this terrible humanitarian crisis unfolding on Europe's doorstep. The European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) has pointed out that refugee numbers may rise exponentially. One point in the Agency's report seems to me especially pertinent: the profile of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks is not that of a foreigner. It is that of young people born here, in Europe. We are faced with an internal fracture here, and a number of questions arise. Notably what is the root cause of this evil and how can we fight it?

Andorra is a country which has taken unity as its motto: "*Virtus Unita Fortior*" (stronger together). Beyond all doubt, social cohesion is one of our most precious assets. I am not seeking to paint an idealised picture of the principality. That said, our small size clearly helps us maintain that cohesion. A country's size is not a value in itself, but it is a feature that enables it to forge links easily, including reciprocal understanding, and to increase its involvement in things. These are two key elements in the political configuration of Andorra. They unite society around a shared project and probably provide an antidote to suspicion, fear and hate. So parliaments, however big or small the country, must mobilise in favour of an inclusive society and ensure that the legal and constitutional framework of our countries makes life easier for our fellow-citizens in all their diversity.

Andorra has seen radical changes over the last sixty years. Since 1955 the principality has enjoyed sustained economic growth, resulting in a big increase in the population, from 6 000 to 90 000, a 15-fold increase. A number of factors have made it easier for migrants to integrate. This melting pot, with over 80 nationalities living together in an area of 468 square kilometres is more the result of policies of unity in diversity rather than uniformity. The most visible factors aiding integration are the jobs market and education. The schools are places of easy interchange which encourage population mixing, where people get to know one another and prejudices can be overcome. In Andorra, incidentally, education is free for everyone. In addition to these two social factors the law has been changed, offering a "new deal" which relaxes the rules on citizenship, introducing *jus soli* and allowing children born in Andorra to foreign parents to be naturalised. Given that the official language of the country is Catalan, Andorra has set up a number of centres providing free tuition in the language. An inclusive society is based primarily on acceptance of foreigners, though other factors must also be taken into account.

I said at the start that the divisions in society are not only due to people's foreign origins. Don't forget, the profile of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe is that of young people born here, second-or third-generation Europeans. The breakdown is also the result of a social fracture. We still have no answers to these phenomena, but we need to understand that the economic crisis that hit Europe in 2007 has led to a more precarious existence for the middle classes and exclusion for the most disadvantaged. It has also caused us to become more inward-looking. Our duty as parliamentarians is to ensure that trust, unity and equality of opportunity for our citizens are restored. In this Europe where the future is uncertain, we must learn to coexist with others and with foreigners, encouraging social cohesion which is key to a Europe of peace, solidarity and prosperity.

### **Mr Einar GUDFINNSSON, Speaker of the Althingi, Iceland**

I would like to begin by thanking Mr Lammert and Ms Bresseur for their excellent presentations and other colleagues who have taken the floor for their interventions.

All three themes chosen for this year's conference are interlinked. The migration and refugee crisis in Europe has led to increased xenophobia, resulting in increased racism and increased support for untraditional political movements.

We have witnessed great change in the political landscape of Europe in recent years. New parties have emerged, following the economic crisis, and parties that enjoyed marginal support have become bigger, at the cost of more established political movements. This is not an isolated case for Europe, as we know from other countries such as the United States and other countries around the globe.

Joseph Nye, the social scientist and Harvard professor, said: "Modern media enhances transparency, but that is a two-edged sword for democracy. More people have information that allows them to participate, but leaders have less time and space for the deliberation and compromise that Madison believed were essential to effective democratic government. In fact, if there is a lesson of the past decade, it may be that information overload rarely translates into a political impetus to find middle ground."

The distinguished professor's views are along the lines of those so well expressed by President Lammert in his impressive speech earlier today.

Many individuals and families have not recovered from the economic setback of the crisis and despite modest economic recovery in Europe many countries face severe economic difficulties and high unemployment. It is thus understandable that many people have the feeling that the "system has failed" and that many people are open for alternative political solutions. More extreme, and sometimes populist, political movements enjoy more support than before, but this is how democracy works.

This form of discontent inevitably emerges during the right circumstances. However, it should be a matter of great concern when it takes the form of a throwback to ideals that are not compatible with the democratic ideals which are the pillars of our societies.

In such demanding times an important question arises: how can we maintain open, inclusive and pluralistic societies based on the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law? This is indeed a challenging task. Legislation against discrimination, against hate crimes and against hate speech, to name a few examples, is an ex-post measure to punish for crimes against basic human rights, but ex-ante measures are also needed. The Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Movement is an example of very good initiatives.

It would be utopian to expect national parliaments to speak in one voice for inclusive societies, not least in these times when political parties with more sceptical approaches against immigration enjoy rising support and thus more parliamentary seats. But it is the obligation of those of us who believe in respect for humans – irrespective of race, sex, belief or background – to be advocates and ambassadors of inclusion and pluralism.

Our political ideal of advocating permissiveness can in itself become self-destructive if it does not at the same time include staunch opposition to views that are averse to our liberal tradition, which incorporates women's rights, religious freedom and acceptance of same sex marriage, to name a few examples of

views generally accepted by our societies – hitherto, at least – but are criticised and opposed by some of the political and religious groups now present in our societies.

Our target group, to use terms from marketing, must not least be the younger generation. I also believe our education systems have the task of informing the youth, who will become the politicians of the future.

Thank you for your attention.

## **The Chair**

That brings us to the end of the speakers' list and to the end of the debate. I thank both keynote speakers, Mr Lammert and Madame Brasseur, and all those who participated in it.

### **I shall now make a summary of our debates yesterday and today.**

As host of this year's European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, I have the honour and the responsibility to present you with my conclusions on these two days.

I start by thanking all of you for your active participation and contribution. The quality of the debates in this Chamber and the high number of bilateral and other meetings confirms the growing importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue and the increasing awareness of the role that parliamentary diplomacy can play in the context of international relations. Our regular meetings make it possible to build bridges and channels of communication that help us exchange experiences and identify common solutions, in the interests of our citizens.

My special thanks and gratitude go to the keynote speakers of each of the three themes of the conference. Their interventions served as guidance and food for thought for the debates that followed. In my opening speech, I recalled some defining dates that have marked our troubled times and changed our perception of the world in which we live. In my conclusions, I would like to mention some "defining quotes" that we heard during our debates, which have set the tone of the Conference. Your statements have captured, in a few words and with powerful images, the fundamental questions that we must address.

To start with Theme 1 – Migration and refugee crisis in Europe – role and responsibilities of parliaments, a question that particularly struck me was: "Do we really walk our walk?" Indeed, as regards migration and asylum, our legal obligations are clearly defined and we know our moral responsibilities. We also agree that solidarity and responsibility-sharing are necessary and that a unilateral response to migration and asylum – a global, unstoppable phenomenon – is bound to be inadequate and short-lived.

However, we must be self-critical and recognise that the political will to walk our walk has been lacking. In fact, the current crisis is not the arrival of 1 million migrants and refugees to EU member States last year – a tiny percentage of the continent's population – but Europe's failure to provide an adequate, commonly agreed response to a flow that had been predicted. This also has to be taken in the context of 3 million refugees, mainly from Syria, in Turkey today.

The debate clearly highlighted the existence of different approaches on how to tackle the present crisis, and a different understanding of its depth and impact on the European project. The debate also confirmed, however, that national parliaments should redouble their efforts to develop a constructive dialogue, with a view to achieving a common position.

Dear colleagues, on the basis of our discussions I have identified a few recommendations that could inspire our future activities. National parliaments should ensure that migration and asylum measures are not geared towards the short term but are embedded in a long term overall revision of policy and legislation. In this context, it is of the greatest importance to develop better integration policies to allow the full inclusion in our societies of those who will certainly stay. Undoubtedly, integration has a cost, but this cost is amply compensated by its benefits for the whole society, as confirmed by our discussions under the third theme.

We should keep it in mind that failure to integrate implies greater costs in the long-term. In addition, national parliaments should be more involved in the decision-making process in the area of migration

and asylum. Thanks to their pluralist and representative composition, they can provide greater legitimacy to decisions, and guarantee that responses are better tuned to citizens' wishes.

The potential of national parliaments to bridge the gap between European decision making and citizens should also be further explored.

At the same time, as politicians, we have the responsibility not to stir or capitalise on public fear and fall into the trap of populism. We must resist the temptation to present our citizens with a false choice between security on the one hand and dignity and liberty on the other. Security must be taken seriously, and so must human rights.

National parliaments should make greater use of their oversight role, questioning their governments on the poor or delayed implementation of decisions taken at European level to tackle the crisis, as well as supervising the implementation of agreements and other undertakings. A comprehensive and effective migration and asylum policy requires a strong external dimension. This includes close co-operation with non-European countries of origin and transit and a targeted development aid policy. It also requires a stronger stance on conflict resolution and the restoration of peace in war-afflicted areas because, as was said, "there is a deficit of peace". These measures would all help in reducing migrant and refugee movements.

Theme 2 – National parliaments and the Council of Europe: together promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law gave participants the opportunity to illustrate the efforts that have been carried out by national parliaments to comply with binding and non-binding Council of Europe texts and decisions, and to co-operate with many of its bodies, including the Parliamentary Assembly.

Several Presidents praised the Council of Europe as a reference in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, having given a major contribution to the consolidation of democratic standards in its member States. To underline the central importance of the European Convention on Human Rights, one President called it "an achievement of human civilisation", a definition which I absolutely support.

Several speakers mentioned the challenging context in which European democracies operate: the threat of terrorism, economic hardship, increasing inequalities, youth unemployment, growing populism to the left and right of the political spectrum; others focused on the broader geopolitical environment in which Europe's relevance is shrinking. Two quotes come to my mind in this regard. The first: "It is in these difficult times that we need leadership and vision. Insularity could jeopardise what has been achieved so far in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law", and the second: "We should not choose between our values and our prosperity. On the contrary, our prosperity depends on our values".

Some speakers also referred to the need to bring democratic institutions closer to citizens, for instance by ensuring greater transparency and inclusiveness in the deliberative process, including through online consultations. This is another area in which the Council of Europe could be of assistance, thanks to its work on e-democracy, and this could be further explored by the Assembly.

A recurrent issue was how to ensure that national parliaments are more receptive to early warnings launched by the Parliamentary Assembly and take greater heed of its resolutions. In my opinion there is room for improving the interaction and co-ordination between national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly and I attach great importance to the pro-active liaison role to be played by the members of national delegations.

At the same time, the Assembly can further improve its knowledge of the interests and needs of national parliaments – for instance, by reinforcing tailor-made and demand-driven activities for national parliaments and promoting direct exchanges between Assembly committees and their national counterparts.

On several occasions, during this conference, we have been reminded of why we should work together and the values that are our common heritage. You may be aware, dear colleagues, that the Parliamentary Assembly has launched a proposal for the Council of Europe to hold a Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member States. I invite you to support this initiative, which could give a fresh impetus to our co-operation in the years to come.

Dear colleagues, this morning our conference discussed the theme, Mobilisation of parliaments against hate, for inclusive and non-racist societies. There was a clear consensus that hatred threatens our democratic systems by undermining social cohesion. Societies are more cohesive when diversity is respected and valued as a richness. They are also, as a result, more resilient to threats, including radicalisation leading to terrorism.

Concerns were expressed about the risk of stigmatisation of some groups, especially in the current context of the fight against terrorism. This risk is amplified by a populist rhetoric, on the right and the left, as well as by the impact of the Internet, which has led to the coarsening of public discourse. As was said, “racism and incitement to violence are not an opinion. They cannot benefit from the right to freedom of expression”.

The speakers suggested several ways in which national parliaments could mobilise against hate. The first and foremost manner is by passing legislation to criminalise hate speech and by convicting the perpetrators of hate crimes. Punishment is not by itself the solution but a step forward. It was clear from our discussions that great emphasis should be placed on prevention. In this context, many speakers highlighted the centrality of education, the importance of education for democratic citizenship – a major activity of the Council of Europe – and the role played by sports and cultural associations.

All those who took the floor mentioned the personal mobilisation of parliamentarians as a key component of the fight against hatred, racism and intolerance. As prominent public figures, members of parliament should set an example, be aware of the language they use in political debate and take a clear public stand against hate. They should also support alternative human rights narratives to hate speech.

In this regard, I thank those of you who took an interest in the hashtag initiative NoHateNoFear, the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and the No Hate Speech Movement. I invite you to follow up on these once you go back to your countries. Mr Thommessen, I found your speech about “role models” particularly inspiring. As political figures, we can influence other individuals, especially the youth, to have trust in democracy and to become tomorrow’s leaders. Whom we choose to meet, what areas of our cities we choose to visit and whom we choose to publicly support, will be the visible sign of how much we believe in equality and inclusion. We should bear this in mind in our work.

Colleagues, this conference has given us many ideas for our future homework. The main difficulty lies with the fact that the matters we discussed in these two days need to be addressed simultaneously and without any further delay. You can count on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to stand by your side in this effort. Thank you very much.

Before officially declaring the conference closed, I am pleased to announce that the next European Conference of Presidents of Parliament will be held in Turkey in 2018. Without further delay, I give the floor to Mr Ismail Kahraman, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

**Mr Ismail KAHRAMAN, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly, Turkey**

First of all may I say how pleased I am to have been part of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, whose agenda has centred on the major challenges currently facing our wider Europe. During the conference we have shown once again that the Council of Europe plays an increasingly important role in tackling these challenges without ever making concessions on the basic principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Turkey, one of the founding members of the Council of Europe, has opted to become one of the major contributors to the Council of Europe budget, in order to boost the Council’s operational capacity in combating these major challenges. Likewise, by enlarging its delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Turkey has taken a very important step in its determination to continue making an active and constructive contribution to the Council of Europe’s work.

As in the past, we shall continue to help safeguard and develop our shared values. In line with that approach we shall be very happy and honoured to host the 2018 European Conference of Presidents of Parliament.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, Mr President, for organising such an excellent conference.

## **The Chair**

It has been a great honour and pleasure for me to receive you in the Chamber. I thank each and every one of you for having actively contributed to our debates. I particularly thank Mr Thommessen of Norway for his vice-chairmanship.

This conference has given us food for thought as well as for action, not only in our respective parliaments but in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Finally, I express my gratitude to those who have contributed to the organisation of the conference, especially the authorities and the city of Strasbourg and the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly – in particular, the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, Wojciech Sawicki.

I declare the conference closed.