Address by Ms. Mihaela SPĂTARU, Acting Head of the delegation of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly at the Third Plenary Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly
“20 years of SEECP: Region – new realities and shared perspectives”
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Madame President of the SEECP PA, Tsetska Tsacheva,
Speakers of Parliaments,
Members of Parliaments,
Distinguished guests,

I am glad to be here in Sofia, Bulgaria, where 20 years ago the foundation of a new initiative, a cooperation framework in South East Europe was laid to strengthen the security in the region, intensify the cooperation in the democracy, economy, health and justice fields and overcome some of the past disagreements. Most important is that we managed in time to build a forum for political dialogue. Furthermore, two years ago, we extended the dialogue to the parliamentary dimension. Discussions are now about a more institutionalized parliamentary cooperation, having a Secretariat and finding the mechanism of budgeting the Parliamentary dimension of SEECP.

Throughout history, the destiny of our region was linked to its geographical position. South Eastern Europe was always at the border or outskirts of empires: Ottoman Empire, Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Russian Empire. But now, in the 21st century, the model has changed: countries want to collaborate, to work together and European Union is an attractive form of association. Now, we are still at the border of European Union. Only half of SEECP states are inside, while the other half is outside. Even some of EU members are still subjects of the Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification.

The Eastern border of NATO is bounded by Bucharest, Sofia and Ankara. Zagreb is inside, Podgorica has a seat now at NATO’s table, and the rest is outside, but still
at the border. After decades of authoritarianism, it is not easy to pass to democracy. Nevertheless, the region has gone through deep economic and political transformations.

The geographical position shaped also the region’s current challenges: threats to the security of the region, including energy security, the unprecedented influx of migrants, ethnic conflicts, but also a large decrease of population. The fragile democracies remain volatile to the influence of other international actors. The global crisis showed the weakness of our growth model based on Foreign Direct Investments and loans. Fast economic growth without institutional reform has led to a hard situation in the region and affected the quality of democracy. After the global financial crisis, our economies moved forward. But the growth was weak and we lacked a substantial progress in bringing our economies closer to EU average.

The prosperity and perspectives of the region are highly dependent on EU and Eurozone. And in the long time run, there is no other perspective for South Eastern Europe than full EU integration of all participants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The wish to overcome past disagreements will be strongly linked with the success of SEECP and, as result, a sustainable development of the entire region. The differences, diversity and opposite views on history may generate conflicts, but the recent history has also successful models of cooperation based on common values, policies and ideas that unite.

We have already made an important step by facilitating and liberalizing visa regime between region’s states. As an example, Chișinău managed, during last year, to establish free visa regime with all SEECP participants. The energy inter-connections are a big step toward a more secure energy sector. We need to continue participation and discussions on energy projects in the South Eastern Europe.
Efforts were undertaken to establish cooperation in the field of cross-border crime control in the region. Trade liberalization with EU for non-EU countries increased the foreign trade in the region.

We consider that the process of reforming SEECP at all levels brings benefits for all participants, making our cooperation more efficient and goal-oriented. Also, developing the dialogue between SEECP and European Union at all levels is a key factor in strengthening the European perspective of all South Eastern states.

At the end, I would like to congratulate Sofia and the National Assembly of Bulgaria for being good hosts and express my gratitude for all your efforts this year in order to consolidate the structure of the Parliamentary Assembly. I would like to congratulate, as well, all SEECP participants on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of SEECP.

Thank you for your attention.