Statement by Ms. Maja Gojkovic, Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly of Slovenia, Mr. Brglez,

honourable colleagues,

ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to greet you on behalf of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and to extend my gratitude to the National Assembly of Slovenia for the extraordinary hospitality and successful Chairmanship-in-Office in the previous period.

At the very beginning, I wish to point out to the fact that we live in an increasingly multipolar world, which results in numerous challenges linked with the process of establishing a new balance in international relations. In such times of a changing geopolitical reality, we are faced by global-scale challenges, such as terrorism, extremism, fundamentalism, separatism, energy security, refugees and migration, climate changes.

Consequences of such threats do not bypass our region either, partly due to its geographic position, but primarily due to interdependence of global processes.

In tackling the common challenges, we are responsibly and solidarly developing cooperation at all levels (regional, European and global) with all our friends and partners. Confirmation of such direction is our aspiration to become an EU Member State, and our policy of military neutrality which we opted for.
Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that it is important that today we consider key aspects of further development of our cooperation, in the light of new developments and challenges in Europe and beyond, but also the development opportunities that stand before us. In this context, it is necessary to jointly identify concrete possibilities for the promotion of regional cooperation. We need to bear in mind that stability and collaboration are affirmed through one of the most successful EU policies - the enlargement policy.

Therefore, in cooperation with our Governments, It is pivotal to recognise and support projects that are in the common interest of our region and make their implementation possible by connecting them with the European Commission’s plans, particularly through the Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A full EU membership is our foreign policy priority. We are committed to reforms, and we actively contribute to the EU initiatives, policies and peace missions, in line with our approximation to the EU.

Further enlargement process is of pivotal importance both for the countries aspiring to the EU accession, and for the EU. The dynamics of the Euro-Integration process is very important for keeping up the momentum for reforms in candidate countries, and it is an important impetus for meeting the membership criteria, notably in the interest of the citizens in the region.

Therefore, we welcome the concrete support to the enlargement perspectives for the WB, particularly for those that consistently implement the reforms and harmonise their legislation with the EU acquis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the same time, I think that the European Union needs to remain consistent with regard to the respect of the principles and policy of dialogue and to the compromise and that it must not remain silent to the challenges in the region that threaten to destabilise this area.
Let me remind you that it was in good faith that we implemented some very difficult decisions made within the dialogue with Pristina relating to the integration of the police and judiciary by using our political credibility to encourage the Serbs to participate in local and parliamentary elections.

On the other hand, even five years after signing the Brussels Agreement, Pristina has not made any progress in fulfilling its commitments.

Moreover, we also witnessed some severe incidents such as the recent arrest of the main negotiator in the dialogue with Pristina, Mr Marko Djuric.

Despite the challenges and provocations, we will continue to approach all the open issues peacefully and reasonably/sensibly, fully respecting international law and committing to the principle of dialogue. In these efforts, the priority goal of Serbia remains the preservation of peace and stability, as a main prerequisite for regional development and prosperity of our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Regional organisations and initiatives are an important link for cooperation at political, economic and cultural levels, which may certainly contribute to a better future of the whole region.

Therefore, I wish to emphasise the importance of the Berlin Process, and the Brdo-Brijuni Process which opened a new perspective for our region with regard to developing infrastructure, economy and cooperation between the young people. Ahead of us is the EU-Western Balkans Summit in May, in Sofia, which will be an opportunity to discuss the key issues for the region and confirm that this part of Europe is really brought into the European Union’s focus.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that through further development of regional cooperation, the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly will contribute to the European perspective of the EU candidate countries, particularly through a continuous mutual exchange of experience with the EU Member States.
Having in mind the essential role that parliaments have in representing their citizens, and their key role in the European integration processes, it is up to us, the parliamentarians, to be committed to reforms and by applying European standards in future to establish the foundations for democracy and peace in the region. This is the best way to contribute to the economic development and prosperity.

We are obliged to discuss all the issues relevant for the citizens of our countries, even when we do not agree on all of them. It is necessary in order to better understand each other, to recognise common interests and to try to find the best solutions for the open issues.

Thank you!