Reaffirming the principles stipulated in the Charter of Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP, as well as other relevant international documents ratified by SEECP parliaments;

Recalling the Declaration on the Inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014;

Guided by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly which establish the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;

Emphasizing the importance of human rights and freedoms and the rule of law in Southeastern Europe, as well as the reforms in the SEECP Participants as a part of their efforts invested within the EU integration process;

Reaffirming freedom of speech and free access to information as a fundamental human right,

Recognizing the role of the principles of ethical and professional reporting to the public and editorial independence of the media,

Having regard to the "Joint Declaration of 3 March 2017 on Freedom of Expression and ‘Fake News’, Disinformation and Propaganda" adopted by Special Rapporteurs appointed by international organizations¹, that provides a focused treatment of the application of international human rights standards to this phenomenon;

**Having regard** the European Parliament resolution of 15 June 2017 on Online Platforms and the Digital Single Market (2016/2276(INI)) that called upon the European Commission "to analyze in depth the current situation and legal framework with regard to fake news and to verify the possibility of legislative intervention to limit the dissemination and spreading of fake content."

**Noting** that media have traditionally played a key role in providing the information that enables citizens to form their own views on societal issues and actively and effectively participate in democratic societies while recognizing that the exposure of citizens to disinformation is challenge globally as well as for SEECP participants;

**Acknowledging** that disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm;

**Expressing** concern that disinformation erodes trust in institutions and in digital and traditional media, and harms our democracies by hampering the ability of the citizens to take informed decisions, and emphasizing that the proliferation of disinformation has interrelated economic, technological, political, and ideological causes;

**The General Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, at its meeting held in Skopje on 10 and 11 May 2019:**

**Calls** on the SEECP participants to stay committed to efforts against disinformation as a topic that should be repeatedly discussed in continuity and maintained at various levels;

**Urges** the participants to recognize the impact that disinformation and propaganda have on public opinion and to take proactive measures in order to counteract such activities, and support research on disinformation to find adequate solutions to neutralize its negative effects;

**Calls** on SEECP parliaments to pay special attention on effective and clear legislation that ensures the transparency of media ownership, and to develop social media guidelines, build the capacity of public communicators and promote media literacy programs at central and local level;

**Reminds** the SEECP participants that the main obligations of governments in relation to freedom of expression and media freedom is to refrain from interference and censorship and to ensure a favorable environment for inclusive and pluralistic public debate;

**Recommends** to the government of the SEECP participants to reach and engage with the wider variety of audiences including traditionally underrepresented groups in policy making, such as women and youth, support and involve civil society, the expert community, private institutions, academia, the mainstream press, journalists’ and media associations and other actors affected, in further enhancement of measures aimed at fact-checking and exposing the disinformation, and provide best safeguards against disinformation campaigns;

**Calls** on media including social media to consider countering disinformation and propaganda as one of their priority mission by insuring transparency and taking
decisively actions against fake accounts while cooperating with independent fact-checkers and by providing accurate and unbiased and responsible information;

**Welcomes** the signing of the "EU Code of Practice on Online Disinformation" as the tangible outcome of the European Commission Communication "Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach", stressing that this is the first time that the online platforms and the advertising industry have agreed on a set of self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation worldwide, on a voluntary basis;

**Highlights** the importance and need for providing funding and education, including seminars and training courses aimed at awareness-raising and tackling disinformation as well as increasing media literacy, while partnering with the civil society, educational institutions and other stakeholders;

**Points to the importance** of actively sharing the examples of best practices in the form of measure already taken by the individual SEECP participants in countering disinformation;

**Calls on** the parliaments and governments of SEECP to analyse the current situation and legal framework with regards to fake news, and to verify possibilities of legislative intervention to limit the dissemination and spreading the fake content;

**Calls** on the SEECP parliaments to provide parliamentarians with information and training on how to prevent identify and react to disinformation and the misuse of social networks and other media.