

PAM 10th Plenary Session Tirana, Albania, 18 February 2016

Greeting Speech by H.E. Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania

Thank you Mr. Speaker of the Assembly,
Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to start this greeting by expressing my special pleasure that this PA with such an impressive turnout at such a key moment for the Mediterranean is taking place here in the capital of Albania, in Tirana.

The year left behind was a year full of challenges, colossal challenges, which we are all together facing as a great family that navigates in a common boat in a tempestuous sea that joins us more than separates us, our “mare nostrum” - the Mediterranean.

I am sure that by following our common vocation, this Parliamentary Assembly being held in Tirana can set a new milestone in the wall of more intensive and fruitful cooperation for the coming years.

The year left behind is over and unfortunately the new year also started with painful sights coming from the islands of Greece, the waters of Italy in the vicinity of Libya or the crossroads of Turkey, where hundreds of refugees lost their lives in our common sea.

And the accidents of hundreds of thousands of people never stop, despite the unsuitable winter conditions. Based on the data of the International Organization of Migration, only the 6 first weeks of this year speak about 409 lives lost in the Mediterranean. Compared with the same period of one year ago the number of refugees that attempt to cross the sea has become 10 times greater.

Today, more than ever before we need to have good coordination and a common platform to find the reasons, the causes that make this ocean of hopeless people continue swelling with every coming month. The same causes that lead to the boom of violent extremism and the triumph of poverty and ignorance, reasons that can be addressed certainly only through greater cooperation among all of us, but also through a strategic Europe, willing to cope together with these challenges that can under circumstances be left up to Greece, Italy or even Turkey.

We are a small country, but very conscious of the great burden of the challenges of this time and very willing to render our contribution to a greater cooperation of our countries to cope together with this drama that every day is ending up in human tragedies in front of our eyes.

We have not been affected by the great flow of refugees because we're not part of the corridor through which they attempt to reach the heart of Europe. But we have been and are willing to give our contribution and to do our utmost in need of assistance.

We are very surprised indeed by the behavior of some EU countries and very certain that refusal to take part of this burden doesn't save anyone from the consequences of not undertaking together to cope with this burden.

We will support always powerfully this cooperation and through this PA we are sure that new ways can be found to further raise the level of cooperation in all fields of common interest for the Mediterranean, not only to cope with this great historic crisis, for this common territory and space, but also for energy, water, environment to improve the business climate, to enhance the parts of communication, transport urban and economic and social development, higher education, teaching and the religious factor in schools, as an element that we should necessarily look at linked with our obligation to educate our children from the very first steps.

Welcoming the PAM this year the Assembly of Albania, in addition to meeting an obligation that is formerly a statutory obligation, testifies once again to its awareness an international commitment as an institution that has the attractive power of the law, democracy and popular sovereignty in the embodiment of every policy and in carrying forward every effort to realize our long term social vision.

Finally wishing that this Assembly taking place in Tirana, comes out with a new spirit to continue and strengthen our cooperation, I wish also to come out as content as possible when you leave our country after you have past, I hope, pleasant hours in Tirana, where without any doubt we are proud of our qualities of hospitality, the qualities of our food and the qualities of our humor. One thing is certain, that Albania has many problems but it is never a boring country. Maybe because we are not yet EU members.

Many thanks.