

## **PAM 10<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session**

### **Tirana, Albania, 18 February 2016**

*Greeting Speech by H.E. Mrs. Mirela Kumbaro, Minister of Culture of Albania*

Thank you.

I am going to talk in French in order to facilitate the work and I need to say that it is my special pleasure that this Assembly is gathered here in Tirana Albania. We are European we are Mediterranean we are Balkans we are people and as a matter of fact we are in a cross road of the civility of cultures and I believe that you could not find a better place than in Albania suited to this Conference. I would like to thank you for introducing topics of cultural dialogue in this panel. So this is a topic of discussion in the last panel of proceedings of today but none the less I think that it is important to highlight culture not simply to be politically correct but not be incorrect better said.

So in Summits they talk about economy they talk about budgets they produce debates about the economic crises and if we have a look behind we will see that economic crises are cyclic in nature they are just displayed and what remains at the end of the day is culture. So if the models change, regime change, what remains permanently is culture. Hence, I believe it's time for us to highlight that what we share as people what is stable what is always there is the culture of the nations. So in addition to migration we need to talk about cultures we need to talk about cultures in plural of the coordination of such cultures and we need to be convinced of the fact that the culture in itself is a topic of luxury it's not a topic of luxury that we allow ourselves to treat after treating other problems. Cultures related to the daily lives and once we decide to consider culture as a daily fact as a daily issue I do believe that the world will be a better place to be lived in.

With all the problems of replacements of migrants because of terrorism fight and war is absolutely indispensable for dialogue to be put at very center of debates. Often times we talk about the peripheral and central cultures, we talk about centers and outskirts of periphery and I often ask myself which is the center or which is the periphery and outskirts. Allow me to share with you a small experience which in my understanding is a considerable experience. I ask myself the question which is the region I come from, and I am not talking from my capacity as a minister of culture but I am talking at my capacity as a normal citizen of Albania, do I come from the center or do I come from the outskirts? So it is the tendency of human kind to consider them, as the center of the world. Albania used to be a dictatorship for 20 years and it lived through one of the hardest dictatorship and a second example in Eastern Europe in the former communist countries whereas the same experiences the same severity similar with one of the Albanian dictatorship was to be identified.

So despite of that we were totally isolated from the world, we lack communication and the day when the dictatorship was toppled we thought that we would win democracy freedom, I don't know how to put it, so we believed at this democracy, and we were labeled as people coming from communist countries, so we were first communist countries and we became former communist countries, as the years passed as more years passed by we were considered as coming from the eastern countries afterward we were considering coming from the southeastern countries of Europe, the more geopolitics were developed we were considered Balkan countries then we were considered as western Balkan countries, so we

are considered ever more countries of the outskirts of the periphery whereas now we are here talking about refugees we are talking about migrants coming from the other countries.

I believe that if we consider the world from this geopolitical point of view we will always talk about centers and outskirts, but if we talk about cultural issues given that there are not such things as big and small cultures and small languages as are big countries and big cultures but there are always cultures that are always capable of sharing with each other and of accepting the other and the other is not always the one coming from the other part of the village the one that comes from the other part of the world but is the other within ourselves. And I believe that when we are capable of recognizing the other inside of us, and when we are ready to accept as being different but acceptable, we will understand that this other is not an alien as Julia Kristeva a writer a philosopher from Bulgaria states that in order for you to , in order for me to get myself best, I need to travel and we need to recognize ourselves in the multifold identities of Albania which is the idealistic plan where the east and the west meet together when they coexist together and Albania actually is the best example in the region in the Balkans even further EUROPE also where their faith religion give the best example of a peaceful cohabitation.

We have seen all different types of problems in Albania but we never had problems related with religious and faith so we got this natural example of providing the world an example of coexistence through culture and not geopolitics, I mean politics can get examples from this very strong interfaith and I have to say that in addition to parliamentary democracy with developed cultural democracies and diplomacies sorry as well, so we often times are tended to adjudge the others based on clichés that refer to international papers, so I think that we need to be introduced by our culture, because we would wish for Albania to take a central place for the culture headlines in the newspapers. In the last years Albania has been introduced by artists by artistic productions and we have amongst, I mean the Albanian artist are among the best artists in the Europe, and cooperate well with other artists and their fellows also in Europe.

Albania is not yet an EU member country but it is a part of the creative Europe program and establishment of this network goes beyond the economics and politics such as the Mediterranean program and I am not only talking about south and north but I am talking about east and west of the Mediterranean they will all be together the idealistic place to talk and understand each other through culture without even passing to the translation. So for instance, if I take into the consideration the latest developments about which the president talked about and we have got this joint enemy namely terrorism, and if this weaknesses instruments have been identified and have been used by terrorism so they don't have economic issues an old poor but they are elements they are people living in the midst of our societies and their weakness is a weakness cultural trauma, which we have neglected to take seriously so far.

So often times, we dedicate a lot of attention to economy, to politics, so we consider migration a political problem rather than a cultural problem, education through schools are education through cultures is a priority we need to share amongst us, so a small country like ours, with a government which pays a lot of attention to education particularly to education through culture, so it has targeted education through culture as an absolute priority of preserving social cohesion and education through culture is not only necessary for small countries but I believe is necessary for the entire world. So we have got a huge plant ahead of us and we need to walk on this direction and we need to base our lines based on economic but also based on culture. Thank you.