



Inaugural Address of President Riccardo Migliori
2012 Annual Session || Monaco
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Official transcript

Dear Colleagues,

I am a little bit excited,

First of all, I would like to address some greetings and make some suggestions that are already largely familiar to you. The first thank goes to the delegation of my country, the Italian delegation, to the members of Parliament and officials of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, without who, we, as the Italian delegation, would have not been able to do what we have done over these years.

The second thank goes, of course, to all those people, those voters in my city, the city of Florence, who, in forty years of political life, elected me district councilor, then city councilor, regional councilor and then, for 17 years, member of the Italian Parliament. I must thank all of you for this extraordinary experience that we are doing within the OSCE and for your trust in me.

Yesterday I addressed the Socialist Group with the same words that Joao Soares said four years ago at the meeting of the Popular Group, when, like me, he was elected President by acclamation: *"I am very proud to be part and member of the Socialist group but, since this moment, I will be the President only of the whole Assembly"*. The same will go for me.

It is obvious that I must also address some greetings. First, I would like to greet the activists of the OSCE, because they are such militants and activists of the OSCE, that in Copenhagen and Vienna everyday keep the Parliamentary Assembly alive: from Spencer to Gustavo to Tina to those who turn off the lights in the evening in Copenhagen. And to Andreas, to Roberto and to Marc, and to those who open the windows every morning in Vienna. Because we are what we are thanks to their daily work.

And I would like to thank, because our Assembly is a little bit unique, we are not the Council of Europe, we are not the European Parliament, and I say this with great respect – I would like to thank the thousands of women and men who, this morning, are present, active on the field, where there is a need for more rights, more democracy, more rule of law.

I would like to greet, together with you, those who, this morning, have opened in Dushanbe the Border Management Staff College for the new Afghan police; to those whom, in this moment, in Bishkek, are giving life to the work of the Academy for prevention; to those whom, this

morning, are giving exams at the Tetovo University, where the flag of the OSCE flies, where Macedonian and Albanian students have demonstrated that integration is possible.

I would like to thank all men and women who daily remind us that we are not a “living room assembly”; that we are more blue helmets of peace and co-operation than parliamentarians, and who remind us that when we are here, we are not parliamentarians who become OSCE activists, but we are OSCE activists who are **also** parliamentarians.

As you can see, and I say this not with fake modesty, I do not have Alcee Hastings’s prestige and I do not have Goran Lenmarker’s experience; I have neither Joao Soares’ charisma nor Petros Efthymiou’s culture, as we have heard today. But, like them, like you, I have a great love for our mission. A love that especially a man among us, who is the history of the Parliamentary Assembly, taught us. And he is the one that all of us in the Italian Delegation have always considered the real leader of our delegation, Roberto Battelli.

One day I was with Roberto in a slightly difficult situation: the polling we had to observe was closed because half an hour before a voter, who was also an activist of a party, was killed. Behind us were several tanks, 500 meters away, and we were surrounded by hundreds of people in a small square of a small village. I was a bit worried. The one who was extremely calm was Roberto, because, he knew, and he knew already from that moment, after 20 years of activism at the OSCE, that we are closer as an Organization to Indiana Jones than to chambers of Parliament. And he was and he is right. Because this is the great lesson of our extraordinary organization. I think that together we can do a great job. We started to do it here. I thank on your behalf Mr. Gardetto for this again extraordinary organization, and I stress ‘extraordinary’, because our friends in Monaco made us feel at home.

I do not know if I will be the last male President of the Parliamentary Assembly, but we have already taken steps forward on gender issues. We elected a young Kyrgyz parliamentarian and this represents a great hope for the increase of the number of women within our Assembly and within the standing committee. We are experiencing a phase of expansion: many countries would like to join the OSCE and it is strange that someone thinks of maybe quitting it. Because you see, we are not a big thing, but with God's help, we can be an important thing.

As Mother Teresa said, we are one drop of water in the ocean of co-operation. But without this drop, hopes of peace and this ocean of co-operation and the work for human rights and security would definitely be poorer.

I thank you for your attention and I invite you to briefly follow three points I’m suggesting. We need to emphasize the role of our missions. This is our essential medal. Yesterday, I thank you, Doris; the Delegation of Germany gave a great lecture on the need for reform. Andreas said appropriate things; I want to say just one. The Assembly will not turn the other way: every time the governmental side, the diplomatic part of our organization, takes away one Euro from the missions to give it to Vienna, we will protest. Because our core business is on the field, not on bureaucracy and on the meetings, which are important, but which cannot cause damage to those who are on the field every day.

And we need great election monitoring, without double standards, but also without any kind of compromise. We must have all possible compromises on security, but no compromise on the issues of human rights, because our credibility is at stake. And so we will have election monitoring in Belarus now; we will have monitoring in Georgia; we will have probably monitoring in Ukraine; we will have on November 6th in USA for the presidential elections. We have to be many; as well, we need to be many in Tirana, where a very important meeting regarding the future of the OSCE will be held.

I thank you because I know how much activism there is in your hearts, despite the difficulties and scarce financial resources of parliaments. I know that many of you are already on vacation or are about to be. Other less lucky parliaments, such as mine, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Greek one, will probably have to work also a part of August. But all of us must be in Tirana, in order to clarify what our future is and on which route we are heading.

Finally, dear colleagues and dear friends, I want to tell you with great conviction that the mediation capacity of our Assembly, as Petros has appropriately recalled this morning, cannot be limited to these meetings. We must be very ambitious. We need to give to the South Caucasus, in Transdnistria – as we are already doing well – the impression that peace, co-operation and rights – starting with those of oppressed minorities – are possible.

If it is not us to do this work in Europe, who does it? That's why we are important.

As it is important to recall here today, with a great act of solidarity with the Russian Delegation that has already been done on behalf of all, for the deaths from the tragedy on the Black Sea which hit that country; as to recall with feeling the Nigerian parliamentarians that died yesterday, burnt in a Christian church in Nigeria together with 90 other believers. It is still possible for people to die for environmental issues or matters relating to ethnic hatred or in violation of religious freedom, in our area or near our area. And if this light was not there – the light of the OSCE and our Parliamentary Assembly – the situation would be worse.

Dear friends, we must be very united in this respect, because we are a great orchestra. An orchestra with different tones; there is someone who plays an instrument, there is someone who plays another instrument, but we all have the same score. The score of 1975: security, co-operation, rights.

The 40th anniversary of Helsinki will also help us to understand, through a major initiative in Sarajevo in 2014, to recall the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, that all of us are committed as militants, as activists for co-operation, to avoid the tragedies that have divided Europe in fratricide during the last century. This is the Helsinki oath that we renew convinced that our score is a great score. Because, you see, you can be reactionary if you react to regain your freedom, you can be revolutionary if there is no other way to regain freedom, you can be conservative when it comes to preserving freedom, but, however, you are always progressive, because without freedom there can be no progress.

This is what I wanted to tell you but I am sure, that these are the same words that flow from your hearts for our work together for the next year. Thank you all, and good work.